

Kenya denies harbouring Sudanese rebels

NAIROBI (R) — Kenya on Friday denied an accusation by Sudan's President Gen. Omar Hassan Al-Bashir that he harboured rebels fighting for self-rule in southern Sudan. "Kenya believes in regional friendship and stability, not backing civil strife," said a foreign ministry spokesman. Gen. Bashir accused Kenya in remarks published on Friday by the London-based Al-Hayat newspaper of harbouring the Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA). The SPLA's humanitarian wing, the Sudan Relief and Rehabilitation Association (SRRA), are based in Nairobi but the rebels claim this group deals only with relief operations. Gen. Bashir said Nairobi had also become the main sponsor of efforts to reconcile the two factions in the SPLA, which has been waging a bush war against domination by the north since 1983. The Kenyan spokesman said peace efforts had been conducted independently by the National Council of Churches of Kenya (NCCCK) in an attempt to minimise senseless killings in the Sudan. NCCCK-organised talks will restart in Nairobi in February aimed at reaching an agreement between rebel factions loyal to John Garang and splinter-group leader Riek Machar.

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U.N. chief sends envoy to Libya

UNITED NATIONS (AP) — Secretary-General Boutros Ghali sent an envoy to Libya on Friday to urge its government to surrender suspects in two airline bombings, said U.N. spokesman Fred Eckhard. Vasily Safonchuk will be seeking implementation of a Security Council resolution that urges Libya, in effect, to turn over alleged Libyan intelligence agents suspected in the bombings of Pan Am flight 103 in December 1988 over Lockerbie, Scotland and French UTA flight 772 in September 1989 over Niger.

Oil prices rise as Europe turns colder

LONDON (R) — Oil prices rose a little on Friday, as buyers expected the prospect of colder weather across Europe to erode gas oil and heating oil stocks which are overhanging the market because of a mild winter so far. North Sea Brent crude oil, a marker for other crude oils, traded at \$18.10 a barrel at 1715 GMT, up 24 cents from Thursday's March contract close on the London futures market. "The market's steady. There's good buying interest in heating oil following strength in the physical gas oil market in Europe," said Chris McCormack, an analyst with Smith Barney, Harris Upham Inc.

Omani, Portuguese leaders discuss ties

NICOSIA (R) — Sultan Qaboos Bin Sa'ad of Oman and President Mario Soares of Portugal talked on Friday about ways of boosting bilateral relations, the Omani news agency said. Mr. Soares arrived in Muscat on Thursday for a two-day stopover before an historic reconciliation visit to India which invaded and annexed the Portuguese colony of Goa 31 years ago.

Jesuit killers get maximum sentences

SAN SALVADOR, El Salvador (R) — Two military officers convicted of the November 1989 murders of six Jesuit priests have been sentenced to maximum 30-year prison terms, a court official said on Friday. The sentence was announced less than 24 hours after the Salvadoran congress passed an amnesty law that left the door open for prosecution of the worst human rights abuses committed during El Salvador's 12-year civil war.

Russia expects 8 million unemployed by October

MOSCOW (R) — Eight million Russians could be thrown out of work within nine months, the chairman of the giant Russian Federation's Committee on Employment was quoted as saying on Friday. But the number of unemployed, currently 60,000, could double at about five per cent of the workforce by the middle of 1993. TASS news agency quoted Fedor Prokopov as saying, "TASS gave no indication of whether the five per cent figure was above or below Prokopov's forecast of eight million unemployed by October. Harvard professor Jeffrey Sachs, an economic advisor to the Russian government, said last week that unemployment throughout the Commonwealth of Independent States — in the process of implementing economic reforms after the demise of the former Soviet Union — could reach 12 per cent by the end of the year.

Austrian iceman 5,500 year old

VIENNA (R) — Carbon-dating tests now show the naturally mummified body of an ancient hunter found in an Alpine glacier could come from the late Stone Age nearly 5,500 years ago, up to a century earlier than previously thought. Walter Leitner of Innsbruck University said the latest results of dating tests on samples from the find put the age of the deep-frozen corpse at between 4,931 and 5,477 years. The five-foot body, found last year with bow, quiver, axe and stitched hide clothing, is considered by scientists to be the oldest and best preserved specimen of early man.

Syria insists on boycotting Moscow talks; Jordan will attend; Palestinians remain undecided

MARRAKESH, Morocco (R) — Syria brushed aside international pressure on Friday and insisted it would boycott next week's Middle East peace talks in Moscow. "We will not go to Moscow," Syrian Foreign Minister Farouq Al-Sharaa told Reuters during an Arab League meeting reviewing results of the peace process.

"The Moscow meeting harms Arab interests because it will take place before anything concrete or positive has been achieved in previous talks," he added.

Jordanian Information Minister Mahmoud Al-Sharif, asked about the Syrian boycott, replied: "Jordan respects the point of view of other countries but we will go to Moscow."

"We want to be partners, not spectators at the talks," he said.

He said nothing would be signed or finalised at the Moscow round. "These talks commit us to nothing. If we boycott the Moscow summit it could harm Arab interests, but if we go it might bring results," he told Reuters.

Mr. Sharif added: "Peace is a struggle just as war is. Only those impressed by it will succeed."

Diplomats said Syria had come under pressure from the United States and Arab allies to take its place at the talks next Tuesday and Wednesday.

They said it was not clear whether Syria had tried to persuade its Arab partners to stay away. The Marrakesh talks were held behind closed doors. No statements were issued.

Mr. Sharaa said Lebanon was also standing by its decision not to attend the multilateral talks focusing on regional issues such as arms control, water rights, economic development and refugees.

Washington, fearing a rebuff by all of Israel's main Arab foes could weaken the content of the talks, has launched a strenuous campaign to coax all key players in the Middle East to send delegations to Moscow.

Syria has declared twice this

month that it would boycott the talks because of continued Israeli settlement in the occupied West Bank and Gaza Strip and what it sees as foot-dragging by the Jewish state.

The United States is anxious the talks go ahead as planned. It sees them as a central pillar to maintain momentum of bilateral Arab-Israeli negotiations launched in Madrid last October.

Syria, the diplomats said, wanted to send a clear signal to Washington that it would not take part in the multilateral negotiations until Israel made some concessions.

They did not expect other Arab states to stay away from the Moscow talks, although formal acceptance of invitations from Moscow would be handled at heads of state level.

The Palestine Liberation Organisation has been excluded from the peace process but will decide this weekend in Tunis whether to authorise Palestinians to join a

Jordanian delegation in Moscow. PLO sources said.

The joint Jordanian-Palestinian formula has been used in previous rounds of talks in Madrid and Washington, but PLO Chairman Yasser Arafat told the meeting his organisation should be formally recognised and allowed a place at the negotiating table, delegates said.

Foreign ministers of the 21-member Arab League gave their assessment of the Moscow talks during a two-hour session at King Hassan's Marrakesh palace. Bilateral meetings were expected later in the day.

It was the last major Arab gathering before Moscow and a Jan. 31 U.N. Security Council review of the peace process.

King Hassan, who is due to address the Security Council, said on Thursday he wanted the status of Jerusalem to be added to the Middle East agenda and be treated like other occupied Arab land.

Baker starts consultation on loan guarantees

WASHINGTON (AP) — Secretary of State James Baker called in Israel's ambassador and congressional leaders Friday for separate meetings on Israel's request for help in settling tens of thousands of Jewish immigrants from the former Soviet Union.

No immediate decision on the request was expected. Mr. Baker is in "a listening mode," a senior U.S. official said.

Israel is asking the Bush administration to guarantee \$10 billion in loans from commercial banks. The money would be used to house tens of thousands of refugees from the Soviet Union and Ethiopia.

The request is entangled in Mideast peace negotiations and the Israel government policy of settling Jewish immigrants on the West Bank and in the Gaza Strip, which the Arabs insist should be traded for peace.

The overwhelming majority of the refugees are not living in the territories. But the Palestinians have threatened to pull out of the peace talks if the guarantees are approved.

Before seeing Israeli Ambassador Zelman Shoval in late afternoon, Mr. Baker met with Sen. Patrick Leahy and Rep. David R. Obey. They are the powerful chairmen of congressional subcommittees that deal with appropriations for U.S. spending abroad.

Mr. Leahy, sharply critical of Israel's settlements, said this week he would do everything possible to block unconditional loan guarantees. He said they should be limited to \$2 billion the first year and reduced by whatever Israel spends on new settlements.

"U.S. policy through every administration since that of Pres-

ident Lyndon Johnson has been to oppose settlements as an obstacle to peace," Mr. Leahy said in a statement issued Wednesday.

Mr. Obey has taken no position on the dispute. He left for Wisconsin after seeing Mr. Baker at the State Department.

President Bush postponed a decision on Israel's request in October while Mr. Baker was trying to arrange Arab-Israeli peace talks. Mr. Baker's aides said this week there is no deadline for a decision. But members of Congress are looking to the administration to act soon.

The guarantees would enable Israel to borrow money from commercial banks at favourable rates. The United States would be responsible if Israel defaulted.

"I do not intend to give a foreign aid blank check drawn on American taxpayers to any country for any reason," Mr. Leahy

said in his statement Wednesday. "I will not support any foreign aid bill that does that."

Some 110,000 Jewish settlers live in the West Bank and Gaza. Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir says he will not relinquish an iota of the West Bank or Gaza.

Mr. Bush and Mr. Baker, like their predecessors, have criticised the settlements as detrimental to peace efforts. The next stage in the peace talks is a conference next week in Moscow on refugees, water resources, weapons buildups and other Mideast regional problems.

Israel plans to attend, along with Saudi Arabia, Jordan, Egypt and several other Arab countries. Syria is boycotting this phase and the Palestinians are holding out for separate invitations. The administration wants to keep them in a joint delegation with Jordan.

FIS names new leader Algerian troops fire warning shots to disperse Islamists

ALGIERS, Algeria (Agencies) — Riot officers fired warning shots Friday to disperse Muslim fundamentalists who were challenging a new ban on assemblies outside mosques, police said. There were no reports of injuries.

The shooting occurred at the Es Sunna mosque in suburban Algiers. It was of several mosques in fundamentalist strongholds that were circled by police and army units in an effort to deter protests over a recent crackdown on the Islamic political movement.

Witnesses said two separate volleys of warning shots were fired, and tear gas grenades were thrown, to disperse a crowd of about 500 people at Es Sunna. Police said officers fired after some members of the crowd attempted to set up loudspeakers.

Armoured vehicles brought at least 200 riot squad members, equipped with clubs, tear gas grenades and water cannons, into the area around another Algiers mosque, Kouba, where officials of the Islamic Salvation Front, the fundamentalist party, led weekly prayers.

The service at Kouba ended peacefully, according to witnesses, a Salvation Front official. Mohammed Said, appealed for calm and warned the government against provoking bloodshed.

Several Algerian and foreign journalists covering the service were detained, according to witnesses. One reporter said seven were detained, another estimated the number at 12.

On Wednesday, the new military-backed government arrested the Salvation Front's acting leader, Abdel Kader Hachani. Authorities also banned public assemblies around mos-

ques and promised to enforce a 1991 law against using mosques as a political forum.

The moves, if effective, would deprive the front of its main channel for communicating with followers.

In a statement reported Friday by the state radio, the Islamic Front denounced Mr. Hachani's arrest, saying: "He was legitimately carrying out his political duties in broad daylight."

Later, the front announced that Othmane Aissani, considered more of a hard-liner than Mr. Hachani, had been selected as his replacement. Mr. Aissani, 37, had been vice president of the front's executive bureau.

At Es Sunna, a heavy-duty machine gun mounted at the top of an outdoor staircase was pointed toward the mosque. Several people said the faithful were being held inside the mosque, unable to leave after the service.

Tension also was high across town, in Kouba, where Mr. Hachani had been scheduled to preach Friday.

Mr. Said denounced the new high state committee, installed last Thursday, and said the army was pointing guns at its brothers. The same people who wanted to create a democracy have rolled in the tanks, Mr. Said said over the Kouba mosque's loudspeakers.

Mr. Hachani's arrest was part of a crackdown by the new rulers on the Islamic party, which only two weeks ago appeared ready to sweep parliamentary elections and install an Islamic government.

The movement won first-round elections on Dec. 26, but was thwarted from a decisive victory by the forced resignation of Pres-

ident Chadli Benjedid and the formation of a five-man ruling council. The runoff elections were cancelled.

Later Thursday, army units withdrew from guard positions around key government buildings where they had been stationed since Mr. Benjedid's ouster on Jan. 11. There was no public explanation for the withdrawal.

Friday's prayer meetings were the first big Muslim gatherings since the authorities said they planned to outlaw politics in mosques.

In the packed Kouba mosque, which was surrounded by security forces, FIS leader Said, told worshippers: "Fire no bullet ... against a brother even if your officers order you. Refuse that even at the cost of your life."

Outside, streets normally full of militants listening to the sermon relayed on loudspeakers were occupied only by paratroopers at the mosque entrance and riot police with sub-machineguns.

At Bad El Oued, another FIS bastion, police fired warning shots to disperse militants trying to erect loudspeakers and defy the order that areas around mosques must not be used for prayers, the Algerian news agency APS said.

The para-military gendarmie headquarters said there were no casualties and the militants had retreated, APS said.

In Kouba, where hundreds of armed riot police took over the hilltop bastion of the FIS and turned away militants from outside the area, Mr. Said told prayer-goers: "The Islamic state will be installed whether they (the rulers) like it or not."

Russians pessimistic about future

WASHINGTON (AP) — A large majority of Russians say they are worse off today than a year ago and they give Boris N. Yeltsin marks of only fair to poor for his performance as president, says a poll commissioned by Cable News Network.

A plurality of Russians said they thought there would be another coup attempt in the near future.

The survey was conducted by the Centre for Studying Public Opinion, an independent polling organisation in Moscow.

Its findings were based on interviews between Jan. 11 and 21 with 1,597 Russians, 517 Russians, 517 Ukrainians and 240 people living in Kazakhstan. The margin of error was 4 per cent.

Mr. Yeltsin is the elected president of Russia. His job performance was rated slightly better in that former Soviet republic than in the other two.

In Russia, 47 per cent rated his job performance as fair and 21 per cent as poor. Only 19 per cent rated it as good and 3 per cent as excellent.

In Ukraine, 31 per cent gave Mr. Yeltsin a fair and 41 per cent said he was doing a good job and 1 per cent excellent. In Kazakhstan, he was rated fair by 46 per cent, poor by 43 per cent, good by 23 per cent and excellent by 5 per cent.

When asked to rate their living standard compared with a year ago, 79 per cent of Russians said it was worse or much worse, 16 per cent said it was the same and 3 per cent said it was better. In Ukraine, 83 per cent said worse or much worse, 14 per cent the same and 2 per cent better.

China, Israel establish formal ties

BEIJING (AP) — China, long an advocate of Palestinian rights, established diplomatic relations with Israel for the first time Friday, opening the way for China to join Middle East peace talks.

Israeli Foreign Minister David Levy and Chinese Foreign Minister Qian Qichen signed the protocol establishing formal ties. Afterward Mr. Levy said he hoped formal relations would help reduce the flow of Chinese arms to the Middle East.

"We have discussed the arms race and know that it is in contrast to the peace process," Mr. Levy said with Mr. Qian at his side. The two men held nearly two hours of closed-door talks at the Diaoyutai state guesthouse.

"I believe that... the fact that we have diplomatic relations, the fact that we are listening to one another, I believe that this will somehow stem this flow of arms," he said.

China has sold missiles to Iran, Iraq and Saudi Arabia and discus-

sed a sale to Syria. China also has sold other weapons to Arab countries, including Egypt and Libya. Some of the weapons, ironically, have incorporated technology China reportedly purchased from Israel, itself an arms exporter.

China has long had close ties with many Arab countries and recognises Palestine, the state declared by the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO). Israel considers the PLO a terrorist organisation.

It was the first time the two countries had formed diplomatic ties since Israel's founding in 1948. In the 1950s, Israel unilaterally recognised China.

Mr. Qian was vague as to what role China will play in Mideast peace talks.

"China will try to push forward the peace process," Mr. Qian said. "China has good relations with the Arab countries and will try to make efforts."

Chinese Premier Li Peng later

met with Mr. Levy and expressed hope that all sides. "The Israeli side in particular, will take a flexible attitude," at peace talks, the official Xinhua news agency reported. It said Mr. Li also expressed sympathy with the Jewish people's historic sufferings.

Mr. Qian accepted an invitation to visit Israel, but no date was set. Xinhua reported.

This past year and a half, China has established or normalised ties with Saudi Arabia, Indonesia, Singapore, Vietnam and Israel, and has moved towards establishing relations with South Korea and South Africa.

China's leaders fear the collapse of the Soviet Union will allow the United States to play world policeman unless China and developing countries move to counter U.S. influence.

China also is eager to obtain high technology from Israel in areas ranging from weaponry to desert irrigation.

Nationalists win in Gaza election

OCCUPIED JERUSALEM (R) — PLO-backed candidates won control of the Gaza Strip Engineers' Association on Friday, Palestinians said.

Elections in professional groups, the only polling Israel allows in the occupied Arab territories, are seen as yardsticks of Palestinian sentiment.

The National List, a coalition of all the PLO factions, won five of the nine seats on the board of the Engineers Association.

A list identified with the Muslim fundamentalist organisation Hamas won the remaining four seats. Hamas previously held a

five-to-four majority over the nationalists in the 650-member association.

But Palestinians said the results were only a minor victory for the National List which previously represented only the PLO's mainstream Fatah organisation.

"People thought this National List, which is now backed by all the PLO groups would get six or seven seats. This isn't much of a victory," said a Palestinian source.

The results of elections to the Chamber of Commerce in the Gaza Strip three months ago were seen as an affirmation of

Palestinian support for Arab-Israeli peace talks, in that election, the list identified with Fatah scored a 13-to-three victory over the Islamists.

This time the National List was also identified with PLO groups opposed to the peace process including the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine and the Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine.

PLO Chairman Yasser Arafat sent a letter to the association urging its members to vote for the National List, the sources said. The letter was displayed at the site of the polling.

OAU welcomes embargo on Somalia

ADDIS ABABA (Agencies) — Organisation of African Unity (OAU) Secretary General Salim Ahmed Salim on Friday welcomed a U.N. Security Council decision to impose an arms embargo against war-ravaged Somalia.

An estimated 20,000 people have been killed or wounded in a bitter feud between ethnic factions loyal to warlords Ali Mahdi Mohammed and Mohammed Farah Aided in Somalia's capital Mogadishu since Nov. 17.

The Security Council called on Thursday for a truce in the fighting and asked the U.N. secretary general to step up relief operations — to send \$12 million of supplies if the fighting stops.

Mr. Salim said the arms embargo was "welcome and timely" and urged Somalia's factions "to heed the calls for an immediate ceasefire so that humanitarian assistance (can) be channelled to the victims and to pave the way for a lasting and peaceful solution to the conflict."

But foreign diplomats dealing with Somalia said the U.N. move would be of no value in resolving the country's political crisis, which has seen the breakdown of government institutions.

"It just shows how completely out of touch the U.N. are with the situation in Somalia. They can't just call for a ceasefire, they should be tackling the question of how to impose one," said one senior diplomat.

The arms embargo requires all states to implement a complete ban on all weapons deliveries to Somalia until the Security Council decides otherwise.

The horn of Africa country was first plunged into anarchy when fighters ousted former dictator Mohammed Siad Barre from Mogadishu a year ago and then began feuding with each other along clan lines.

Calls for an intervention force to be sent into Mogadishu have mounted since the United Nations failed to broker a ceasefire this month.

Meanwhile, food prices in

Somalia's war-torn capital decreased for the first time in weeks after 8,400 tonnes of aid supplies were looted from warehouses, relief workers said Friday.

The distribution of the food from warehouses at the port had been suspended at the outbreak of three days of fighting in early September by the forces of Mr. Mohammad and Gen. Aided, chairman of ruling United Somali Congress.

A United Nations official, speaking on condition of anonymity, said all clan-based factions apparently participated in the looting Wednesday.

"In a way it's good. People are eating," he said.

The U.N. World Food Programme donated the food last August for distribution by the New York-based relief organisation Care.

Since the current battles began Nov. 17, Mogadishu has suffered severe food shortages. And most people could not afford to buy what little food was available, relief workers say.

Fraud claims dog Mauritania polls

NOUAKCHOTT (R) — Mauritania's first presidential election on Friday was dogged by bad organisation and opposition claims of fraud.

Confusion and anger reigned at many polling stations in the sand-strewn capital Nouakchott.

Many people could not find their names on voting lists. Others could not cast their ballots because of errors on their voting cards. Some were issued with no card at all.

"It may be intentional on the part of the government. It could also be incompetence," said one Western diplomat observing the election, the West African country's first multi-party poll since independence from France in 1960.

Mauritania is one of the few Arab League members to have adopted a multi-party system of electing its president, with universal suffrage.

Diplomats say military President Maouya Ould Sid Ahmed Taya, who last year bowed to popular demanding for reform, faces a tough challenge from former exile Ahmed Ould Daddah, brother of Mauritania's first leader Mokhtar Ould Daddah.

Two other candidates, Mohammed Ould Mah and Mustaha Ould Saleck, could divert enough of the vote of take polling into a

second round scheduled for Feb. 7.

Men and women swathed in flowing desert robes queued for hours outside polling stations in the warm January sun. Tempers frayed in many parts of the capital as supporters of Mr. Taya and Mr. Ould Daddah alike found they could not vote because of administrative errors.

Parliamentary police with rifles controlled the crowds and helmeted riot police were on guard outside many polling stations.

Mr. Ould Daddah's backers cried foul, accusing the government of massive cheating.

"We can prove there's been fraud and that is enough reason to annul the election," said Behir Hassen, spokesman for the main opposition Union of Democratic Forces (UDF) which supports Mr. Ould Daddah.

He claimed tens of thousands of opposition voters were systematically excluded from registering or casting their ballot while Mr. Taya's supporters cast multiple votes with false voting cards or in different polling stations.

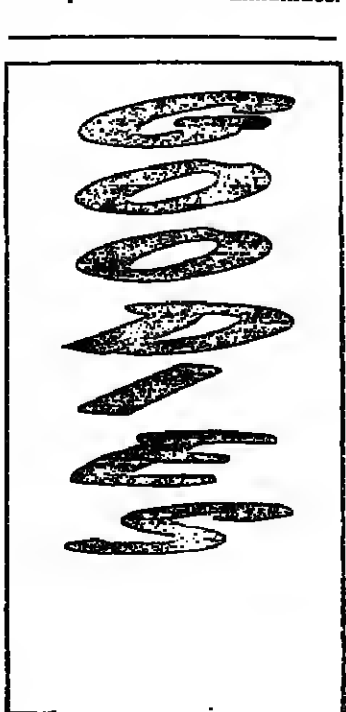
Diplomats said they found evidence of irregularities such as falsified identity cards issued to under-age voters.

Supposedly indelible ink used to mark voters was rapidly shown to be useless — a Reuters correspondent removed all trace from

her finger with saliva and a paper tissue.

Much of the polling was likely to be on broadly ethnic lines reflecting Mauritania's deep split between the dominant Arabic-speaking Moors and black Africans from the south of the huge desert country.

Mr. Ould Daddah, a Moor like the other three candidates, says he represents all communities.



MIDDLE EAST NEWS IN BRIEF

Pro-Israeli gunmen detonate bombs in South Lebanon

MARJAYOUN, Lebanon (R) — Pro-Israeli gunmen found and detonated two bombs in Israel's self-styled "security zone" in South Lebanon on Friday, security sources said. They said a South Lebanon Army (SLA) patrol discovered the bombs on a road in the hills of Al Nabi Taher. A bomb went off by an SLA patrol near the village of Sojoud inside the strip on Thursday, they added. The Israeli-run Voice of the South Radio station said the blast injured an SLA man and destroyed a vehicle. No group claimed responsibility for the attack but militants of the Tehran-backed Hizbollah (Party of God) have stepped up raids on Israeli and SLA targets recently to show anger at Arab-Israeli peace talks. In another development, Israeli troops and the SLA tightened a noose around two Christian and two Muslim villages inside the zone after residents refused to enlist in a new militia recruitment drive, security sources said. They said residents aged between 17 and 35 were barred from leaving or entering the Shiite town of Bint Jbeil and the three nearby villages of Rumaish, Ain Ibel and Alma Ash Shaab. Some 1,000 Israeli troops and the 3,000-strong SLA patrol the 15 kilometres deep zone carved out in 1985 to curb cross-border guerrilla assaults on Israel.

Judge confirms award against Saudi businessman

NEW YORK (AP) — The Philippine government has won another court victory in its efforts to recover nearly six million dollars from Saudi businessman Adnan Khashoggi. But collecting on the 3-year-old judgment against the former billionaire arms dealer was not expected to be easy, said attorney Fred Sherman, representing the Philippine government-owned National Development Co. He said Khashoggi's remaining U.S. assets include his \$20 million Manhattan condominium and its contents. Khashoggi's lawyer, Steven Bierman, declined to comment on U.S. District Judge Milton Pollack's order Thursday or say if he would appeal it. The Philippines accused Khashoggi in 1986 of taking \$3.5 million of another company's assets that should have been distributed to the development company.

Iran opposition reports Tehran protest

NICOSIA (R) — An Iranian dissident group said more than 1,000 relatives of political prisoners demonstrated last week in front of the Red Cross office in Tehran. The Iraq-based Mujahideen Khalq said police clashed with the demonstrators and arrested a number of them. There was no independent confirmation. The group said in a statement sent to Reuters in Cyprus that the protest coincided with a visit by a delegation from the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) to inspect Iranian prisons. The demonstrators shouted slogans against Iran's supreme leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, and President Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani and demanded the release of political prisoners. The Mujahideen had earlier charged that Tehran was preparing for the visit by executing dozens of political prisoners and transferring others to secret jails. The Geneva-based ICRC said in November it had won Iran's agreement to send a team of inspectors with freedom to talk privately with prisoners.

Christians demonstrate for peace in Khartoum

KHARTOUM, Sudan (AP) — Thousands of Sudanese Christians marched peacefully in Khartoum on Friday to urge an end to almost nine years of civil war in the south, home to millions of their co-religionists. The marchers, estimated by organisers as high as 7,000, were led by Khartoum Archbishop Gabriel Zubair Wako. They walked from St. Matthew Cathedral overlooking the Nile to a school compound, where Wako spoke and led prayers in a two-hour ceremony. "We call and pray for a halt to the war and the realisation of peace so that our displaced brothers (southerners) can return to their homes and participate in building Sudan," Wako said. An estimated 3 million people, about half the population of the southern regions of Equatoria, Bahr El Ghazal and Upper Nile, are displaced by the civil war. It enters its 10th year in the spring. Southerners are predominantly Christian and animist. Most displaced southerners live in shantytowns on the periphery of urban centres. Khartoum is ringed by 30 such shantytowns. The rebel Sudan People's Liberation Army took up arms against the Muslim-dominated central government in Khartoum to demand greater autonomy and a better economic deal for the south. Street demonstrations are banned in Sudan, but the government authorised the Christian procession.

Fear, hunger for thousands in besieged Sudan town

JUBA, Sudan (R) — Thousands of terrified, hungry civilians have crowded into the government-held southern Sudanese capital of Juba, besieged by rebels who have emerged from the jungle to bombard the outskirts with artillery.

Rebels have apparently moved to within a few kilometres of the town's southern side. Their shells have killed about 100 people and wounded scores in the past two months.

"The shelling is indiscriminate, it's not directed at military targets," a relief official told a Reuters correspondent who visited the derelict town on Friday. Juba's population of 90,000 has been trebled by refugees from the countryside since the town first came under siege in 1988.

Now the civil war, nearly nine years old, between southern rebels of the Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA) and the government in Khartoum is closing in on them.

Living conditions are appalling. In a four-roomed building that once served as a school, 300 people have found shelter. Many others sleep outside.

The SPLA, which is fighting what it sees as domination by the Arabised Muslim north over the mainly Christian, black south now controls most of the vast region of southern Sudan.

Juba, 1,200 kilometres south of Khartoum, is the biggest prize. Despite a split last August between two factions of the SPLA, led by John Garang, a new campaign against Juba has been mounted with the onset of the dry season.

Once-bustling markets have been deserted. Many residents subsist on lily plants harvested from the River Nile and cooked into a foul purple porridge.

The United Nations is currently flying in 1,400 tonnes of food aid from Uganda, but the supplies are sufficient for only a few weeks.

"Until we began bringing in supplies, the refugees here were at the point of complete starvation," said one relief official.

The U.N. had to win permission from both sides to mount the mercy airlift, part of its Lifeline Sudan Relief operation started in 1989 to bring relief to the south.

If Labour changed its leader, it would defeat Likud

Shamir favours June elections to settle political crisis

OCCUPIED JERUSALEM (AP) — Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir said Friday there was no way around early elections to solve Israel's political crisis and mentioned June as a likely date.

A poll, meanwhile, indicated that the opposition Labour Party is gaining against Shamir's Likud Bloc, reducing the gap from 15 per cent in November to 5 per cent this month. Israel's elections are scheduled for Nov. 3, but Shamir lost his parliamentary majority earlier this week when two far-right coalition partners pulled out over the Middle East peace talks.

Mr. Shamir is likely to survive a no-confidence motion in parliament next week after winning the one-time support of a former coalition partner.

"Though we can overcome the no-confidence vote on Monday, who knows what will be next Monday. We can't fight

for every vote," Shamir aide Yossi Ahimeir quoted the prime minister as saying Friday.

"It seems there will be no way out of early elections. If there are elections, the preferred date is June," Mr. Shamir said in a meeting with the Shin Party, an ultra-orthodox faction, Ahimeir reported.

But he said Shamir's decision is not final and Likud has not begun negotiations with Labour for an acceptable date. Shamir needs Labour's backing to pass a bill to dismiss parliament and set the stage for an early vote.

In the survey conducted by the Smith Research Centre, the right-wing Likud won 32 per cent and the centre-left Labour 27 per cent. In a similar poll in November, Likud won 37 per cent and Labour 22 per cent.

A separate question showed that if Labour changed its leader, naming Yitzhak Rabin to



Yitzhak Rabin

replace Shimon Peres, it would defeat Likud.

In the upcoming campaign, Middle East peace talks and the future of the occupied West Bank and Gaza Strip will be the key issues.

Likud advocates negotiating an interim self-rule agreement with the Palestinians, but opposes returning any land.

Labour supports both autonomy and territorial compromise in a final settlement.

The question of whether Rabin or Peres heads Labour is relevant since the two are competing for the party's No. 1 slot in Feb. 19 primaries.

If the more hawkish Rabin leads Labour into the next elections, the party would win 36.5 per cent of the vote, compared to 28 per cent for Likud, the survey said. If Peres remains No. 1, Labour would get 28 per cent, compared to 33 per cent for Likud.

In the 1988 election, Likud won 34 per cent and Labour 31.5 per cent. Neither party has ever won an outright majority, forcing it to form coalitions with smaller parties.

The survey was conducted in mid-January among 1,100 Israeli Jews over 18. The margin of error is 3 per cent. The poll was published in several Israeli dailies.

Russian or Jewish? Families in search of a nation

By Esther Hansen-Loewe
Reuters

AMSTERDAM — After two years of wandering in Moscow, Israel and Hungary, Sergei and Helena are stranded with their two children near the Dutch town of Eindhoven.

Sergei, a 43-year-old Jew, and Helena, a Russian Orthodox Christian aged 39, were driven from their home town of Mogilev in Belarus by an anti-Semitic pogrom.

"I had a Soviet passport, but it carried Jewish nationality so we could only go to Israel," said Sergei, who asked for his surname not to be published.

But when they arrived in Israel, Helena, a Belarus national, felt despised because of her religion.

"It started immediately when we got to the airport. They asked Sergei 'why did you bring her along?'" she said. They have been married for 20 years.

"The others on our plane from Moscow were given housing, but we had to find a hotel of our own," said Helena.

Though many immigrants have difficulty finding work and affordable housing in Israel, where 10.4 per cent of the workforce is unemployed, Sergei's construction skills were in great demand.

But he said each time his colleagues found out about his mixed marriage he lost his job.

"We were also forced out of our house when we told our neighbours that my wife is a Christian," he said.

They decided to leave. About 140,000 Soviet immigrants arrived in Israel in 1991, but an increasing number of them are disappointed.

The Jewish agency, responsible for bringing Jews to Israel, says more than 10,000 Soviet newcomers requested passports in 1991. Based on the pattern of 1990 statistics, the majority of successful applicants will leave Israel for good.

Outside the official figures are many others, like Sergei and Helena, who leave with only informal papers.

They came to the Netherlands via Hungary. "It was the only country that would give us visas as we had no passports," said Sergei.

On December 16, after a few

months in a Dutch refugee hostel, with fading hopes of being granted asylum, the family was among 43 Soviet Jews awoken by a pre-dawn police raid. They were taken straight to the airport to board a specially chartered flight to Tel Aviv.

"We were taken out of the plane at the last minute because we were told our asylum application was not legally closed. But all our belongings and documents went on that plane," Sergei said.

Now they have nothing but the hope to eventually be allowed to settle in the Netherlands. "Or any other democratic country with religious freedom," said Helena.

European Community countries are currently grappling with the problem of rising numbers of

immigrants of all kinds, especially from Eastern Europe.

Some 1.3 million people have already migrated West from Eastern Europe, in the wake of political change and economic upheaval. Five million more may leave the former Soviet Union in the next few years, the authorities there predict.

The Dutch government is shoring up defences against a feared flood of so-called economic refugees as well as asylum-seekers.

Already a crowded country, but with a tradition of tolerance, the Netherlands is planning laws to control illegal traffic in refugees rather than just trying to curb the number of applicants.

And immigration police stick strictly to the rule book. By the end of December they

had extradited 52 people of Soviet Jewish origin to Israel. Some 135 others, Sergei and Helena among them, face the same fate because technically they have been accepted by a democratic country (Israel).

The rules say such people cannot claim refugee status — on either political or humanitarian grounds.

But Helena and her family want to go anywhere but Israel. "In Israel they throw stones at me, but I want to stay a Christian. And I want to bring up my children in freedom."

They have even considered returning to Russia, but there they say they would be spurned as traitors.

"Even at the (Russian) embassy here they called us that," said Sergei.

The riddle of the pyramids may be solved

By Mimi Mann
The Associated Press

CAIRO, Egypt — Among the most tantalising mysteries of Egypt are those shielding the origins of the pyramids. Who built the first ones? Where, and why?

A leading American Egyptologist is convinced he's close to the answers.

David O'Connor of the University of Pennsylvania believes the three famous Giza pyramids near Cairo, built over a 70-year period 4,500 years ago, evolved from the earlier monuments of a religion that had existed for centuries.

In September 1991, O'Connor led an archaeological team to Abydos, where Egypt's earliest Pharaohs built monuments. The ancient religious centre 450 kilometres south of Cairo honours Osiris, the god of resurrection.

Their amazing discovery at Abydos of 12 buried wooden ships belonging to Pharaohs who reigned almost 5,000 years ago made sense of an earlier find: a mound inside a Pharaoh's funeral structure.

So much of the mound was destroyed in antiquity that O'Connor and his colleagues were unsure exactly what it was when they dug it out in the late 1980s. Was it an early pyramid, they wondered — maybe even the first?

Then in September, a half-kilometre away, they found boat pits covered by mud brick shaped in the contours of boats. Ancient priests had blessed the vessels inside with offerings of pottery,

then sealed the pits. To O'Connor, curator of the Egyptian section of Penn's university museum, the boats are the key, important clues that link up with Egypt's first pyramid.

"I'm not saying this has to be the first pyramid," he said, "but we know something must have come before the huge pyramids in the deserts around Cairo, some prototype that became the first stepped pyramid, then a true pyramid."

"I think I've found it at Abydos."

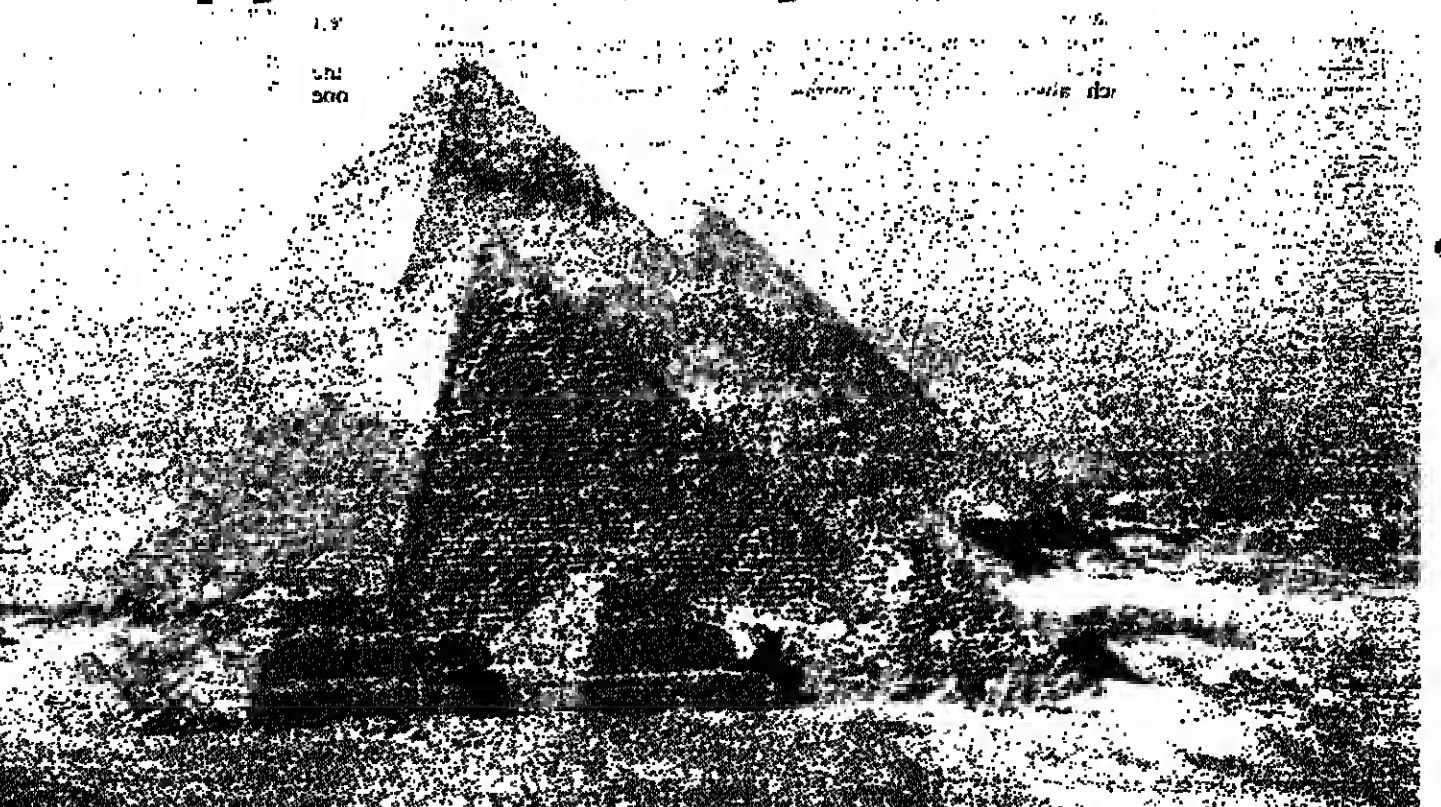
The origin of the pyramids is hotly debated, and O'Connor's theory is certain to add more fuel. He said the earliest evidence of the pyramid is in pictures on artifacts that predate the pharaohs and depict a mound with sides in a stair-step design.

Much later, such a mound would be the model for the glorious six-step pyramid of Pharaoh Zoser in Sakkara, south of the Giza pyramids. Royal architect Imhotep built Zoser's 60-metre-high pyramid, the world's first major architectural achievement in stone, at about 2,620 B.C.

The classic straight-sided shape evolved within decades and true pyramids dominated 1.5 kilometres of the Nile.

At Abydos, the pharaohs thought small. By the time they reached the deserts around Giza, they thought big.

Many Egyptologists believe the pyramid represents the pharaoh's ladder to heaven, the buried boats his means of riding eternally across the sunlit skies by day, the starry skies by night. The



eternal journey symbolised resurrection.

Zahi Hawass, antiquities director of the Giza pyramids area, called the discovery of the Abydos boats "wonderful and amazing." He agreed that O'Connor probably is on the road to answering the pyramid puzzles.

"Early in Egyptian history, priest developed a formula for burial to ensure the pharaoh's resurrection," Hawass said. "You had a pyramid, boat pits and a funerary monument where prayers and offerings to the pharaoh were given."

Five pits surrounded the great pyramid of Cheops at Giza. A dismantled vessel was pulled up in 1954, reassembled and put on display as the royal ship of Cheops, one of Egypt's greatest archaeological treasures. A second dismantled ship lies in an adjacent pit.

By Cheops' time, 200 years after Abydos, boats were so important that his pyramid contains vents to allow the soul easy access to the buried boats for the eternal ride.

Unfortunately, pyramids were easy prey.

"They said to robbers, 'take me. I've got goodies inside,'" Hawass said. "So pharaohs had to find another way to burial and means of resurrection."

More energy went into temples, with the pyramid-topped obelisk replacing the traditional pyramid.

Pharaohs covered tomb walls with magical formulas. Instead of burying boats, they put boat scenes on tomb walls to transport their souls. Later tombs often had small pyramids on top.

In the new kingdom, 1,000 years after the Giza pyramids, pharaohs tried another trick.

JORDAN VALLEY ARABIAN STUD

The Jordan Valley Arabian Stud announces that there is a large selection of video films that deals with horseback, cross country, show jumping, horse management, polo, dressage and equestrian events, Queen Elizabeth horses and stables and other famous stables and horses, Arabians and Thoroughbred. VHS, PAL system.

The films are available at the office to be offered for members.

For more information call No. 829882 Jordan Valley Arabian Stud.

JORDAN TIMES DAILY GUIDE AND CALENDAR

JORDAN TELEVISION

Tel: 773111-19

PROGRAMME TWO

18:00 Les Tortues Ninja
18:30 La Famille Foutaine
19:00 News in French
19:15 Varieties
19:30 News in Hebrew
20:00 News in Arabic
20:30 American Funniest Home Video
21:00 Encounter
21:30 For the Sake of Children
22:00 News in English
22:30 Feature film: "La Mort Adieu"

PRAYER TIMES

05:09 Fajr
05:29 (Sunrise) Dhuhr
11:48 Dhuhr
13:02 'Asr
17:06 Maghrib
18:26 'Isha

CHURCHES

St. Mary of Nazareth Church Swifels, Tel. 810740
Assemblies of God Church, Tel. 632785
St. Joseph Church Tel. 624990
Church of the Annunciation Tel. 637440
De la Salle Church Tel. 661757
Teressanta Church Tel. 622366

Church of the Annunciation Tel. 623541

Anglican Church Tel. 625383, Tel. 628543
Armenian Catholic Church Tel. 771331
Armenian Orthodox Church Tel. 775261
St. Ephraim Church Tel. 771751
Assisian International Church Tel. 685326
Evangelical Lutheran Church Tel. 811255
The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints Tel. 628224, 654932
Church of Nazareth Tel. 675691

WEATHER

Bulletin supplied by the Department of Meteorology.
It will be fair and windy with northerly moderate. In Aqaba, there will be a chance for scattered showers of rain and winds will be northerly moderate and seas calm.
Min./Max. temp.
Aqaba 2 / 19
Deserts 0 / 14
Jordan Valley 6 / 16

Yesterday's high temperatures:
Amman 10, Aqaba 17 Humidity readings:
Amman 61 per cent, Aqaba 30 per cent.

USEFUL TELEPHONE NUMBERS

AMBULANCE:
Dr. Ghaleb Zawideh 736123
Dr. Issam Al Asmar 890504
Dr. Saad Ali 788285
Dr. Hisham Kanaan 790286
Firas pharmacy 661912
Fardous pharmacy 78336
Al Asma pharmacy 657055
Nairokh pharmacy 626672
Al Salam pharmacy 636730
Yacoub pharmacy 644945
Shamsi pharmacy 637660

NIGHT DUTY

DR. ABDAL:
Dr. Ghaleb Zawideh 736123
Dr. Issam Al Asmar 890504
Dr. Saad Ali 788285
Dr. Hisham Kanaan 790286
Firas pharmacy 661912
Fardous pharmacy 78336
Al Asma pharmacy 657055
Nairokh pharmacy 626672
Al Salam pharmacy 636730
Yacoub pharmacy 644945
Shamsi pharmacy 637660

IRBID:
Dr. Abdul Hameed Ghannabeh (—)
Al Shamsi pharmacy (278825)

ZARQA:
Dr. Mubashir Hijwani (—)
Khalifeh pharmacy 985417

EMERGENCIES

Food Control Centre 637111
Civil Defence Department 661111
Civil Defence Emergency 630341
Rescue Police 192, 621111, 637777
Fire Brigade 891228
Blood Bank 775121
Highway Police 843402
Traffic Police 896390
Public Security Department 630321
Hotel Complaints 602800
Price Complaints 661176
Water and Sewerage 897467
Amman Municipality 787111
Complaints 787111
Telephone Information (directory assistance) 121
Overseas Cable 610230
Central Amman Telephone 623101
Abdali Telephone Repairs 661101
Jordan Television 773111
Radio Jordan 774112
Water Authority 680100
Jordan Electricity Authority 813615

HOSPITALS

AMMAN:
Hussein Medical Centre 813813/32
Khalifeh Maternity, J. Amn. 642816
Alkhal Maternity, J. Amn. 642412
Jabal Amman Maternity 642362
Malhas, J. Amman 646174
Palestine Shmeisani 6641714
Shamsi Hospital 849445
Al-Munasser Hospital 6672779
The Islamic, Abdali 666127/37
Al-Ahli, Abdali 6641646
Indian, Al-Muhajjaran 7771013
Al-Bashir, J. Abdali 7751126
Army, Marja 891611/15
Queen Alia Hospital 60224050
Amal Hospital 674155
ZARQA:
Zarqa Govt. Hospital (09)983323
Zarqa National Hospital (09)900560

Ibn Sina Hospital (09)986732

Al-Hilma Modern Hospital (09)909990

IRBID:
Princess Basma Hospital (02)275555
Greek Catholic Hospital (02)272275
The Al Nafes Hospital (02)247100

AQABA:
Princess Haya Hospital (03)314111

FOR THE TRAVELLER

QUEEN ALIA INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT

This information is supplied by Royal Jordanian (RJ) information department at the Queen Alia International Airport Tel. (05)5220-5, where it should always be verified.

ARRIVALS
Royal Jordanian (RJ) Flights (Terminal 1)
05:00 Kuala Lumpur, Singapore (RJ)

9:00 Damascus (RJ)
9:30 Dhahran (RJ)
9:30 Cairo (RJ)
9:30 Aqaba (RJ)
9:30 Beirut (RJ)
10:30 Beirut (RJ)
11:45 Karachi (RJ)
12:15 Colombo (RJ)
15:45 London (RJ)
18:15 Frankfurt, Vienna (RJ)
19:25 Tripoli (RJ)
20:30 Helsinki, Aqaba (RJ)

Other Flights (Terminal 2)
12:00 Rome, Beirut (AZ)
20:15 Rome, Beirut (AZ)

DEPARTURES

Royal Jordanian (RJ) Flights (Terminal 1)

06:15 Beirut (RJ)
07:00 Aqaba (RJ)
08:45 Aqaba, Helsinki (RJ)
08:55 Brussels, London (RJ)
12:00 Vienna, Frankfurt (RJ)
12:00 Tripoli (RJ)
12:15 Amsterdam, New York (RJ)
12:30 Brussels, London (RJ)
12:45 Rome, Madrid (RJ)
14:00 Geneva, Paris (RJ)
20:00 Jeddah (RJ)
21:30 Abu Dhabi, Dubai (RJ)
22:00 Bahrain, Doha (RJ)
22:45 Aqaba, Helsinki (RJ)

Other Flights (Terminal 2)

06:30 Paris, Damascus (AF)
08:15 Beirut (MS)
13:00 Soama (TJ)

MARKET PRICES

Upper/lower price in file per kg
Apple (red) 700 / 700
Apple (yellow) 500 / 500
Banana 500 / 450
Banana (Mekassar) 550 / 500
Cucumbers (small) 520 / 500
Cucumbers (large) 170 / 120
Carrot 220 / 160
Cauliflower 320 / 260
Onions (large) 250 / 200
Onions (small) 600 / 500
Eggplant 200 / 150
Garlic 560 / 500
Grapefruit 180 / 120
Lemon 180 / 120
Marrow (large) 200 / 150
Marrow (small) 350 / 300
Oatmeal (dry) 180 / 120
Onion (green) 180 / 120
Oranges 420 / 250
Pepper (red) 600 / 500
Pepper (green) 400 / 300
Potato 540 / 300
Radish 120 / 80
Sage 600 / 500
Spinach 200 / 150
Tomato 420 / 360

Industrial fair opens, official pledges to increase role of local councils

IRBID (Petra) — A total of 70 Jordanian industrial firms are participating in a week-long industrial exhibition which is being held at Al Hassan Sports City in Irbid.

The exhibition, which was opened by Minister of Municipal and Rural Affairs and the Environment Abdul Razzak Tubaisat Thursday, is displaying foodstuffs, clothes, furniture, electrical and electronic appliances, ornaments, textile and plastic products among other manufactured goods produced in Jordan.

The minister, who earlier toured a number of regions around Irbid, announced that the ministry will issue a series of regulations this week concerning construction operations and licences for setting up buildings in Irbid and the other cities of Jordan.

Speaking at a meeting with heads of local councils in the Al Kuma District within the Irbid Governorate, Dr. Tubaisat said the amendments to a number of laws concerning the function and activities of the local councils will also be announced with a view to promoting services to the public.

Stressing the importance of the local council's role in stimulating

the socio-economic development process in Jordan, the minister said that local councils should give more attention to cleanliness, lighting of streets, public gardens and control of construction operations in their regions.

The ministry has already embarked on drafting amendments to laws and regulations that had already been discussed with heads of councils prior to submitting a memorandum in this regard to the Cabinet for approval this week, said Dr. Tubaisat.

The ministry has recently taken measures to transform village councils to municipalities, to increase the salaries of mayors and to offer further assistance to local councils in order to encourage them to double their efforts, the minister said.

Dr. Tubaisat listened to the views of the heads of local councils, who outlined the main obstacles impeding improvement of services and the council's current financial situation as well as environmental problems. The minister told the meeting that his departments are preparing for a nation-wide campaign in March to deal with the insect problem and help provide a better environment for cities and villages alike.



MISSION ACCOMPLISHED — A Sudanese envoy who delivered a message to His Majesty King Hussein on Thursday, left Amman Friday and was seen off by Jordanian officials and Sudan's ambassador to Jordan. The message, delivered at the Royal Court, was from Sudanese President Omar Hassan Al Bashir and dealt with Jordanian-Sudanese relations and efforts on the part of Jordan and Sudan to end inter-Arab differences resulting from the Gulf crisis, according to the

Jordan News Agency, Petra. Petra said that the envoy, Mahdi Ibrahim, exchanged with the King views about Arab affairs and means of promoting Jordanian-Sudanese cooperation, mainly in economic fields. The audience at the Royal Court was attended by Chief of the Royal Court Adnan Abu Odeh, the King's Military Secretary Prince Talal Ben Mohammad and Sudan's Ambassador to Jordan Abdullah Gabara.

1992 UNRWA budget totals \$572 million, education services dominate

AMMAN (J.T.) — The United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees (UNRWA) has just published its 1992 regular budget of \$572 million, \$283.5 million out of which will be earmarked for education services, \$102.8 million for health, \$62.5 million for relief and social services and the rest for common and operational services, according to a report.

The report said UNRWA Commissioner General Ilter Turkmen was appealing to the international community for an extra \$4 million in aid this year to provide for Palestine refugees living in Jordan.

The report said the funds will be used to construct an elementary and preparatory school, hire teachers, build additional classrooms, provide for emergency medical help and offer a limited number of low-interest loans to help create jobs.

According to the report, the special fund was needed to cope with the results of the Gulf crisis which saw the displacement of large numbers of Palestinian refugees, most of whom had lost their livelihood and savings overnight.

The report said that most of the returning Palestinians ended up in Jordan and became dependent

on UNRWA services. It said that 7,000 returning children were added to UNRWA schools in Jordan during 1991.

According to the report Mr. Turkmen made it clear that in Jordan UNRWA was not only coping with a natural expansion in the refugee population, but was absorbing the Palestinian returnees into its already over-burdened system.

The report explained that despite positive developments in the search for a solution to the problems confronting the Middle East, many of the more than 2.5 million Palestine refugees registered with UNRWA are suffering severe economic and social consequences of the Gulf crisis.

Continued instability and hardship in the region, particularly in the Israeli occupied West Bank and Gaza Strip, has served to underscore the essential role of the agency in providing indispensable assistance to the Palestinians who, after more than 40 years as refugees, still lack a secure future, the report said.

The report listed the following countries which, it said, contributed to UNRWA's operations, with the USA providing the largest amount with \$63.3 million in 1991: The USA, the European

Community, Japan, Sweden, Italy, Great Britain, Norway, Canada, Germany, Switzerland, Finland, the Netherlands, Denmark, Belgium, France, Spain, Austria, Australia, Saudi Arabia and Kuwait.

The report referred to Mr. Turkmen's annual report to the U.N. General Assembly last year in which the commissioner general drew attention to the severe effects of the Gulf crisis on the lives of the Palestinian refugees, appealing for further donations to enable the agency to carry out its humanitarian services in its fields of operations.

The UNRWA report coincided with the publication at the United Nations of an assessment of the economic situation in the Middle East region in the wake of the Gulf crisis.

The report, quoted by the Jordan News Agency, Petra, said that Jordan was the third country after Iraq and Kuwait to sustain the heaviest damage to its economy as a direct result of the Gulf crisis which broke out in 1990.

According to the U.N. report, Jordan's national economy was severely affected with the result that the Kingdom's gross national income has been included to 3 per cent.

Finance minister urges more cooperation regarding consumer tax collection

AMMAN (Petra) — Finance Minister Basel Jardaneh has issued a series of regulations concerning the implementation of a government order to factories and industrial manufacturers to pay a consumer tax, calling on various manufacturers to cooperate with the customs departments in their areas.

The regulations, disclosed Friday, said that factories and other businesses should facilitate the work of customs officials and inspectors by making available books showing the types and amounts of products produced for local consumption or export. They should also make available bills and receipts for sales and other means to ensure control of the process and facilitate the calculation of the consumer tax on produced items.

Inspection of book-keepers records does not mean cancelling the right of the Customs Department to carry out a thorough



Basel Jardaneh

examination of the records against inventories of stored products, the statement noted. It said that the customs offices will initially calculate the consumer tax against the book-keepers'

books which are to be presented to the customs departments regularly.

However, spot checks and examination by customs officers of any factory remains the right of the Customs Department, according to the statement.

According to the regulations, factories requiring to store products in ware houses outside the factories should acquire approval from the customs office in advance. Any products to be produced for the first time by the manufacturers or amounts of goods to be destroyed also requires advance approval from the customs offices, the statement noted.

The statement also gave specific instructions on procedures to be followed with regard to goods prepared for export, noting that all products reaching the market for sale should bear a tag noting that the consumer has been paid by the manufacturers.



Prime Minister Sharif Zeid Ben Shaker meets with leaders of the Jordanian Federation of

Electricity Workers to discuss the state of the electricity sector (Petra photo)

Electricity sector reviewed

AMMAN (J.T.) — A special ministerial committee is currently studying the situation of the electricity sector in Jordan prior to introducing measures designed to boost its services and ensure more efficient work and production, according to Prime Minister Sharif Zeid Ben Shaker.

Speaking at a meeting in his office with Walid Khayyat, chairman of the board of the Jordanian Federation of Electricity Workers and board members, the prime minister urged the workers to double their efforts to enable the electricity company to overcome its present financial crisis and offer better services to the public.

Mr. Khayyat and his group called at the Prime Ministry Thursday to express the workers' appreciation of the government's support of their demands and its successful mediation last week to settle a dispute between the workers and the management and board of directors of the Jordan Electric Power Company (JEP- CO).

It took the workers and company management 10 hours to reach a settlement to the dispute that had threatened cuts in power supplies in Amman and major parts of the Kingdom.

The agreement provided for 2,200 workers to receive a pay increase which would total JD 300,000 according to Minister of Labour Abdul Karim Al Kabarti, who was instrumental in clinching the deal one day before a general strike by the workers was scheduled to start.

Originally, the workers had demanded that JEP- CO grant the employees a raise totalling JD 750,000, including benefits, and had demanded that the company pay for workers social security contributions.

Both the company, which claims it has sustained heavy losses in the past three years, and the workers union had to agree to a compromise package in order to avert a strike.

Mr. Khayyat had suggested that the company could collect more from subscribers by impos-

ing a one fils per kilowatt of power consumed. He said that with such a raise, JEP- CO would collect an extra JD 1.6 million, enough to take care of the company's troubles and improve services as well as cover the raise offered to the workers.

At the meeting, the prime minister voiced the government's appreciation of the workers' role and their efforts to serve their nation. Mr. Khayyat pledged continued efforts on the part of the workers who, he said, would fully cooperate with JEP- CO management.

Mr. Khayyat voiced the workers' deep appreciation to the prime minister who had delegated the labour minister and other officials to ensure a settlement to the dispute. He said that the agreement was an incentive to the workers to exert extra efforts.

Present at the meeting were Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Transport Ali Suheimat, Minister of Energy and Mineral Resources Ali Abul Ragheb and Minister of Labour Abdul Karim Al Kabarti.

HOME NEWS IN BRIEF

Princess opens art exhibition

AMMAN (Petra) — Her Royal Highness Princess Wijdan Ali opened Thursday at Alia Art Gallery an art exhibition by Jordanian artist Alia Amoura. The exhibition, which will last till Jan. 29, displays 40 abstract oil paintings.

Measures designed to stimulate industrial sector

AMMAN (Petra) — Industry and Trade Minister Abdullah Ensour said Friday the ministry will work on stimulating and encouraging the industrial sector through granting it more tax exemptions. Dr. Ensour said his ministry will take measures aimed at opening new markets for Jordanian industries to increase the volume of exports so as to overcome the period of stagnation in the industrial sector and provide more jobs to the unemployed. The development of the industrial sector requires support from all the concerned parties and treating it as the agricultural sector, which always tops the priorities of the government, he said.

Government offices to close for holiday

AMMAN (Petra) — Ministries, government departments and public institutions will be closed on Feb. 1, 1992 in observance of Al Israa Wal Mi'raj anniversary, according to a communique issued by Prime Minister Sharif Zeid Ben Shaker Thursday.

Duties of committee reassigned

AMMAN (Petra) — Prime Minister Sharif Zeid Ben Shaker decided Friday to shift the duties of the Returnees Welfare Committee from the Ministry of Interior to the Ministry of Social Development. The committee was created in the wake of the Gulf crisis to take care of the affairs of the Jordanian expatriates who were forced to return home from Kuwait and other Gulf states and to assist them. In another development, Interior Minister Jawdat Al Shoul approved Thursday the exchange of the returnees' Kuwaiti driving licences with Jordanian ones without the need for them to undergo a driving test. According to the decision, holders of Kuwaiti private and public driving licences of the third and fourth categories issued before Aug. 2, 1990 can exchange their licences for Jordanian ones, while holders of Iraqi licences issued in Kuwait after that date can exchange their third category licences only.

House approves RJ laws

AMMAN (Petra) — The Upper House of Parliament has approved laws pertaining to the national air carrier, Royal Jordanian (RJ), and a 1991 law on protecting the national economy which were referred to it from the Lower House of Parliament. In the meeting, which was held Thursday under the chairmanship of House Speaker Ahmad Al Lawzi and in the presence of the two deputy premiers, a Royal decree appointing Jordan's ambassador to the United Nations, Abdullah Salah, as member of the House was read by the Parliament's secretary general. Mr. Salah's tour of duty to the U.N. ends this month. The House referred to its Financial Committee a 1979 amendment to the Central Bank of Jordan (CBJ) law and the 1988 general budget law. The House was informed of the approval of the Lower House of Parliament on the CBJ law amendment, a 1989 amendment to the Income Tax Law and a 1975 amendment to the Jordanian Banks Law. The Upper House had previously approved these laws. In another development, the Lower House will meet Sunday under the chairmanship of Speaker Abdul Latif Arabiyat and in the presence of the Cabinet ministers. The House will refer several laws to its specialised committees to study them for approval.

Symposium on desalination of water begins today

AMMAN (J.T.) — A two-day symposium on brackish/seawater desalination and recycling of used water will begin today with the participation of several concerned departments and water specialists in the Kingdom.

The symposium, which has been organised by the Higher Council for Science and Technology (HCST) and the METITO Group of Companies, is expected to review five working papers dealing with wide-ranging topics related to desalination and recycling of water in the Kingdom. Speeches are expected from HCST Secretary General Abdullah Toukan, METITO Group of Companies Chairman Farouk Ghandour and Minister of Water and Irrigation Samir Kassar, according to an HCST statement.

It said that the papers will deal with the following topics: reverse osmosis, theory and costs, speciality chemicals, application of reverse osmosis, technology for water reclamation, how to save 40 per cent of domestic water consumption, and chlorination technology for suppliers of safe water.

WHAT'S GOING ON

- ★ Art exhibition by Her Royal Highness Princess Wijdan Ali and Italian ambassador to Jordan Franco de Courten at Abdul Hammed Shoman Foundation Gallery — 10 a.m. - 5 p.m.
- ★ Exhibition of the activities of the Goethe Institute in Amman at the Institute, Jabal Amman.
- ★ Exhibition of paintings by Alia Shanti Amoura at Alia Art Gallery.
- ★ Art exhibition by Kamal Jawhari at the British Council.

EMBASSY OF INDIA, AMMAN REPUBLIC DAY

To mark the 43rd Republic Day of India, a flag hoisting ceremony will take place on Sunday, January 26, 1992 at 10:00 a.m. at the Embassy of India, First Circle, Jabal Amman.

All Indians are cordially invited to attend the ceremony.

British Embassy Annual Notice To All British Nationals Living In Jordan

Have you registered with the British Embassy. If you are a British citizen and live in Jordan please contact the British Embassy, Consular Section, in order to obtain a registration form.

If you have registered during 1991 please confirm your continuing presence in Jordan by re-registering as soon as possible. Please also notify the Consular Section about any changes of address and/or telephone number. Such confirmation is in the interests of all British nationals in Jordan.

If names are not re-registered within three months the Embassy will be obliged to consider that those concerned have left the country. The names will accordingly be deleted from the register.

If you are a citizen of a Commonwealth country which does not have an Embassy or Consulate in Jordan please ask the British Embassy, Consular Section, about registration formalities.

The British Embassy is located in Abdoun, near the Orthodox Club. Telephone 823100. The Post Office Box Number is 87.

The Consular Section is open from Sunday until Thursday 0830 - 1200 hours.

FOR SALE

By method of sealed bids six (6) unserviceable cars.
DUTY NOT PAID

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Cooperatives sign protocol

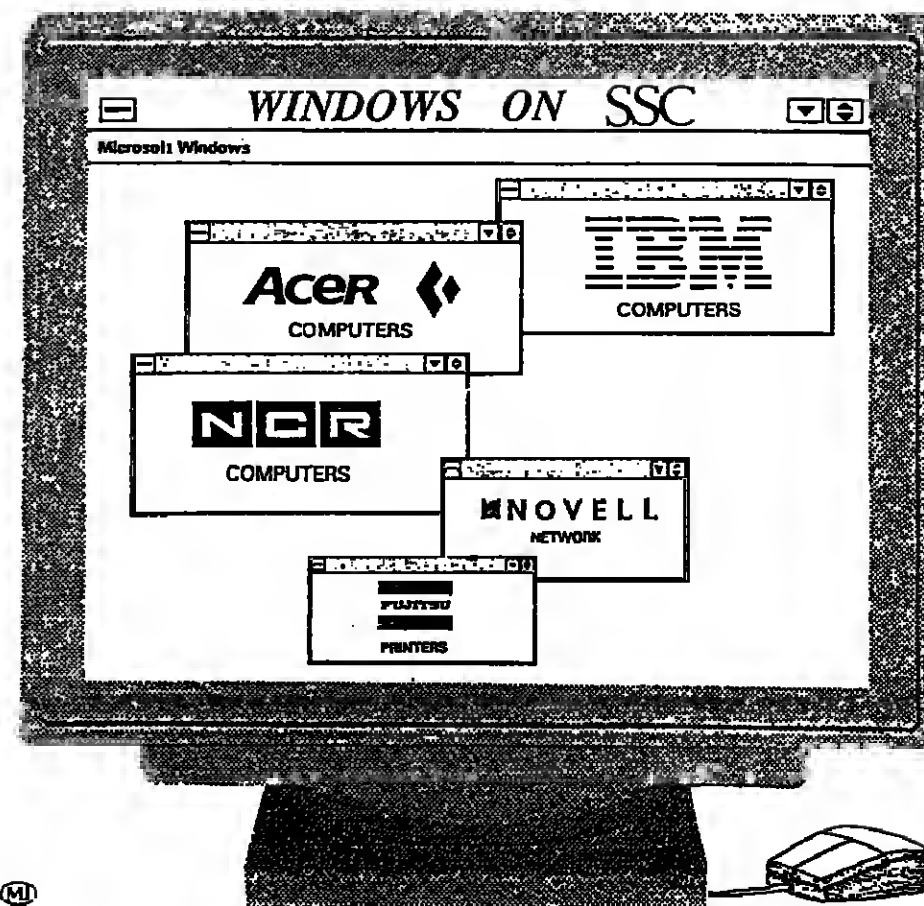
AMMAN (Petra) — A protocol on joint cooperation between the Jordan Cooperative Organisation (JCO) and the Arab Farmers and Cooperatives General Federation was signed at the premises of the JCO Friday.

The protocol provides for cooperation and coordination between the two sides in the fields of consultancy, training, studies and the exchange of information and statistics as well as benefiting from the JCO's expertise.

The protocol was signed by JCO's Director General Jamal Bdour and by the federation's Secretary General Abdul Jalil Ghumari.

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Resolution is controversial

THE ADOPTION of the recent U.N. Security Council resolution calling on Libyans to surrender two Libyans suspected of blowing up a Pan American airliner over Scotland in 1989 breaks new grounds in international law. To begin with, the council had never in the past reached such a decision on matters related to terrorism per se. In this sense, the resolution on Libya constitutes a novel precedent that has questionable legal foundation. Contemporary history is replete with cases of gross and systematic human rights violations, including massacres involving thousands of innocent people. But the Security Council never thought for a minute to take a decision requesting the apprehension of the suspects and their surrender to the international community. Second, there is really no standing international tribunal that has jurisdiction over incidents comparable to the destruction of the Pan American plane by a bomb. It would be legally untenable to surrender the two Libyans in question to any authority other than the United Nations. But since the international organisation has no body, permanent or ad hoc, that has jurisdiction over such issues, it would be interesting to see by which international agency the accused will be prosecuted to determine their guilt or innocence.

If the intention is to use the U.N. system to apprehend the Libyans and give them up to the U.S. or Britain, then again one is at a loss to find legal basis for such an acrobatic exercise. What would exacerbate the legal implications of the council's verdict is the fact that Libya became the second Arab country in a row that has been subjected to new and improvised use of international power in order to arrive at an objective that in itself may not be so objectionable. It would seem that Libya is in for some drastic actions by the U.N. should Tripoli decide to refuse to oblige by trying the accused under domestic jurisdiction, as indeed is the case under normal circumstances. If economic sanctions were to be deployed against Libya as a prelude to some even more drastic actions, then the Arab World, or what is left of it, would have to make its opinion loud and clear on such serious deterioration in the application of the new international order.

For one thing, the Arab League may intervene by proposing that the Arab regional organisation be seized with this case and to leave it to the Arabs themselves to investigate and even prosecute the suspects. Should the Arab reaction remain muted, then there is no telling which Arab country would become third on the list of the countries that could be subjected to the kind of raw power that is being exercised by the U.N. on behalf of Washington and London. In any event, this case of the Libyans needs to be discussed and debated in existing international legal fora, including the International Law Commission, which is the primary U.N. organ seized with the mandate of interpreting and codifying international law.

ARABIC PRESS COMMENTARIES

THE WHOLE world was attaching great hopes on the Middle East talks in Madrid and Washington, expecting that U.N. Security Council Resolutions 242 and 338 will be implemented to bring about peace to the Middle East, said Al Ra'i Arabic daily. But all these hopes, which accumulated ever since Israel occupied Palestinian lands in 1967, were dashed away because the U.S., along with France and Britain, chose to divert world public attention from the Arab-Israeli issue and direct it towards the 1988 plane crash in Scotland, said the paper. Instead of benefiting from the fact that the Arabs and the Israelis are sitting at the negotiating table to force Israel to withdraw from occupied territory, the Western nations chose to direct their attention towards Libya, accusing the Arab country of being responsible for the crash, the paper continued. Right at this moment, London, Paris and Washington are busy conjuring up evil machination and preparing the ground for a fresh aggression against Libya, thus further taking the world public opinion's attention off the reality in the Middle East and Israel's continued intransigence and its rejection of the peace requirements, the paper said. It said that Washington and its allies do not wish to ask the Security Council to force Israel to withdraw from the occupied territories although they can take that measure if they are indeed keen on upholding international legitimacy. The paper said that the opportunity is still there for Washington to take the first step in this direction and it is hoped that American patience over Israel's practices is running out, prompting the Bush administration to embark on serious actions to ensure peace in the Middle East.

SAWT AL SHAAB Arabic daily also dwelt on the topic of Western accusations levelled against Libya for its alleged involvement in the downing of the Pan Am plane over Scotland in 1988. It seems that the second stage of Western aggression against the Arab World is now in the offing as the Western nations are busy themselves with plots to attack the Libyan people, said the daily. The paper said that the first aggression was directed against Iraq, an aggression which is continuing through the sanctions designed to cripple the Iraqi economy, and now it is the turn of Libya, against which the West is fabricating accusations. The Western countries had earlier accused Libya of financing the secret Irish Republican army, seeking liberation from Britain, of being involved in threatening France's interests in Chad and later of being responsible for the 1988 aircraft crash, prompting the United States to launch an air raid on Libyan installations, said the paper. It said that the Western capitals are now conspiring to launch yet another attack, to be preceded by an economic blockade on Tripoli. What is badly needed now is a unified Arab stand behind Libya supporting the Arab country, the paper said. It added that the Arabs should not forget that the U.S. and its Western allies would not hesitate to strike against any Arab country in the course of protecting Western interests.

Sharon's second front

Government exploits Gulf war for takeover of Arab land in Israel

The following article is reprinted from Challenge, a magazine of the Israeli left.

By Michal Schwartz

AT first glance, everything seems perfectly legitimate. What could be more justifiable than using agricultural land to build housing for the homeless in the face of a massive wave of immigration? Maybe for once, Minister of Housing Ariel Sharon is indeed working without hidden motives and in the best interest of the public when he annexes Arab land to the areas of jurisdiction of Jewish towns inside the Green Line, expropriating a significant proportion of the land from its owners in the process.

The recent takeovers of Arab land inside Israel — in the Galilee, the Triangle (the Wadi Ara-Um Al Fahm area) and the Negev desert — are unprecedented. The transfer of land from Arab to Jewish ownership inside Israel complements the mass land confiscation and settlement-building going on in the occupied territories. Yet, whereas the latter has been the subject of much attention and international condemnation, Mr. Sharon has had a free hand to grab Arab land inside Israel.

A closer look at the maps which emerge from this transfer of land, at the history of each plan and the means used to implement it, must raise serious doubts about the legitimacy of both motives and means, and grave concern about their consequences.

On Feb. 14, 1991, in the midst of the Gulf war, while Israeli citizens were hiding in their sealed rooms, Minister of Interior Aryeh Deri signed two short documents which redefined the areas of jurisdiction of two key Arab regions inside Israel: Nazareth and Wadi Ara.

The area of jurisdiction of Nazareth Illit — a Jewish city built above Nazareth in the 1960s on confiscated Arab land — was expanded by 7,330 dunums at the expense of four nearby Arab villages: Kufir Kana, Mashad, Reineh and Ein Mahel. In Wadi Ara, the area of jurisdiction of Um Al Fahm was reduced by 500 dunums to allow the construction of new Jewish settlements and the enlargement of existing ones.

In the Negev, a new Jewish town, Lurit, is to be built adjacent to the Beduin village of Laqia — as if there were a lack of alternative building space in the desert. Plans are to settle

another 400,000 Jews in the Negev, but there is no mention of the Arabs of the region and where they will fit into the process.

The tragedy of the situation is that state of Israel has already taken control of 96 per cent of the land within the Green Line that belonged to Palestinian Arabs before 1948. What is at stake now is the remaining 4 per cent, the poor man's lamb, which already falls short of the present needs of Arab citizens of Israel, not to mention their future.

The plans are not new. The current confiscations are actually the implementation of plans drawn up in 1976 as part of the policy known as "the Judaisation of the Galilee." This was the war cry of the notorious Yisrael Kuening, then-district commissioner of the north and architect of the policy to create a Jewish majority in the Galilee by building Jewish-only settlements to serve as wedges between existing Arab villages. The settlements would separate the Arab villages from their fields and from each other, while leaving them without land and preventing them from further growth and development.

Mr. Kuening's plan drew a unified response from Palestinians in Israel, angered at the obviously discriminatory policy. Mass meetings and demonstrations were held, and a general strike was announced for March 31, 1976. On that day police entered Arab villages in great force, leaving behind six young martyrs, an event which has been commemorated ever since as Land Day. As a result of the protests, the plans for land annexation were frozen, but not annulled.

Now, under the cover of Gulf war, a conspiracy of silence from politicians and the media, and a leadership crisis among the Arabs in Israel, these plans are being implemented almost unnoticed. Protest measures have been frozen, demonstrations cancelled, appeals to the High Court suspended.

Whereas in 1976 there were not enough Jews to settle the Galilee, the triangle, the Negev and the occupied territories, the current immigration is supplying the necessary numbers — or so Mr. Sharon and the Israeli government hope. The inevitable conclusion is that, rather than using the land to serve the immigrants, the government is using the immigrants to serve the policy of Judaising Arab areas.

The scope of this subject goes well beyond one article. To gain a

better understanding of the process, let us take a brief look at the case of Nazareth, which hides its religious significance for Christians is the most important political and urban centre for Palestinians living in Israel.

Nazareth's unanswered needs for industries, universities, hospitals, etc. are huge. The city itself is home to 60,000 Arabs, and the population of the surrounding Arab villages, exceeds 100,000. Yet the area of jurisdiction of Nazareth is only 12,500 dunums, of which not one inch is left for development. By comparison, the Jewish town of Nazeret Illit has a population of only 25,000 in an area of jurisdiction of 19,300 dunums, which it hopes to enlarge.

Of the 7,330 dunums annexed to Nazeret Illit in February, some 500 dunums located on Jabal Sikhi were expropriated from within Reineh's area of jurisdiction. The tragic meaning of these figures on the personal level became clear to me when I accompanied Hassan Khutaba, head of the Reineh local council for the last 13 years, to the site, where he lost some 70 dunums of land. His face crumpled at the deafening roar of the heavy machinery eating away the mountain and pouring concrete. White scars were visible where only weeks before his family's brown and green olive grove had been.

Bulldozers tore down the trees

in a Blitzkrieg-like operation six weeks after the Feb. 14 plan had been announced. "They gave you six weeks to appeal as a formality, reject the appeal, and in a twinkling of the eye the land is gone," Mr. Khutaba says. "I will die knowing that I failed to secure a future for my children."

Mr. Khutaba recently learned of a plan to build an industrial zone onto a Jewish city scheduled for construction where the Arab village of Safouriya once was. The site of the industrial zone was annexed to Nazeret Illit from Mashad village last February, despite the distance between the two areas (see map). To connect the industrial zone to Nazeret Illit, a new bypass road will be constructed across three kilometres of Reineh's land to the west. An additional 630 dunums will be confiscated for this purpose, and the road will separate the village from 5,000 dunums of its remaining land, which is also scheduled for confiscation or annexation. Mr. Khutaba is not sure that this is the last word, either.

Reineh's history is typical. In 1944, during the British Mandate, the village had an area of jurisdiction of 15,777 dunums for a population of only 1,500. Reineh residents owned another 6,000 dunums not included in the area of jurisdiction near Mount Tabor, bringing the area of the village's lands to 21,500 dunums. After

the state of Israel was established, Reineh's local council was dissolved and military rule imposed until 1963. Consecutive government land annexations started in the 1950s and continued until the 1976 decision. Reineh residents lost about 12,500 dunums of private property, 6,000 of which were within the village's area of jurisdiction.

Only in 1968, when the Reineh local council was recognised, was the village's area of jurisdiction defined. Today Reineh has 9,500 people and 9,000 dunums. Of this, only 2,770 dunums are included in the village's zoning plan — the area in which all building, public or private, must take place. The numbers illustrate the big difference between the dunums-per-capita ratio in 1944 as compared to 1991. The ratio is expected to decrease in the future due to natural population growth.

For some villages, the 1976 annexations included lands that were in their jurisdiction during the Mandate but were not included when the local council was recognised in 1968. Some of this land was annexed to the areas of jurisdiction of Jewish towns but not expropriated. Owners could still plough the land and grow trees on it, but they needed the authorisation of the Jewish local council to dig a well, pave a road or build a hut. This was like half expropriation. Over the years the authorities negotiated with the

Arab local councils, promising that the land would be returned to the councils in due time. These hopes were dashed on Feb. 14.

Reineh's situation is even worse. The land annexed recently came from within the 1968 area of jurisdiction, which was already less than half the land the village once owned and insufficient even for today's needs. What is more, the land was not only annexed but expropriated, lost to its owners forever.

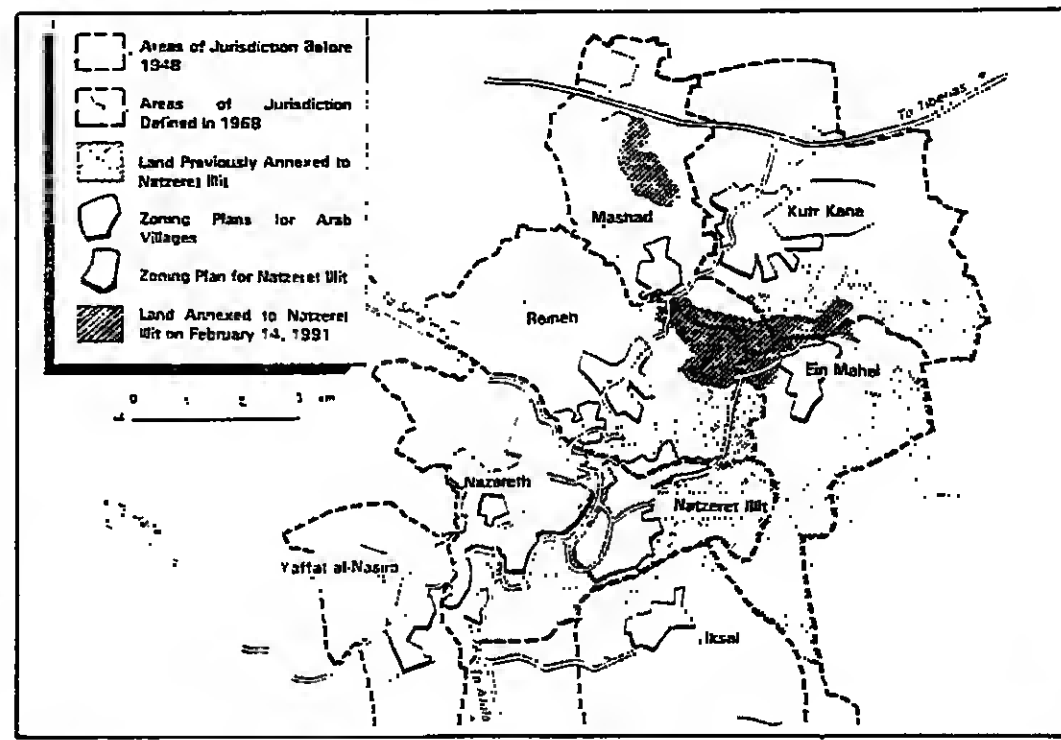
"Our village has suffered from oppression and injustice, which were expressed in purposeful neglect and in the establishment of Nazeret Illit on village lands," says Mr. Khutaba. "For more than 20 years Reineh was without water, electricity or any services whatsoever. We understand that all these things point to a plan to transform our village into a slum, lacking any basic necessities, in the shadow of a modern city built on our plundered lands."

"If the pretext is the needs of young couples, why ignore the needs of Reineh's young couples, the legal owners of the land, when devising this project? Is there anyone who has more right to develop on our land than us?"

The result of the government's policy is the disappearance of agriculture from the life of the village and widespread unemployment, especially among youth, including university graduates. The local council does not have the means to carry out public development projects due to lack of funds and basic services. This situation is duplicated in most Arab villages in Israel. Palestinians in Israel believe the ongoing plans have serious implications for their future.

The government ignores the fact that we are citizens of this state, that this is our homeland and we have no other. It disregards our demand to be treated equally under the law," says Mr. Khutaba. "Whatever the circumstances, it is unacceptable to build the future of one people at the expense of another, and in turn us into landless people, into foreigners as hostages, in our own homeland."

The government's policy regards Palestinian Arabs as enemies to be removed rather than as a people whose rights should be respected. Many Palestinians believe the real aim of the plan is to "encourage" Arab youth to emigrate; they call it "quiet transfer." At stake is the very survival of the Palestinians of Israel, the quest for coexistence and equality, and future relations between Israel and the Arabs.



Arabs should confront Israel united

THE WEEK IN PRINT

Reviewed by Elia Nasralla

JORDANIAN newspapers discussed the peace process and the prospects of the multinational conference in Moscow, to take place towards the end of this month, the situation in Algeria, the threats to Libya and a host of domestic issues in Jordan.

Under the heading: "The road from Washington to Moscow," a columnist in Al Ra'i Arabic daily said that as long as the Arab and Israeli sides have not reached any sort of agreement to settle the basic issues in the bilateral talks in Washington, there can be no point for the Arabs to go to Moscow. At the Washington meetings Israel made it clear that it was not abandoning the Syrian Golan Heights and it was not ready to give up any inch of occupied Palestinian land or withdraw its troops from southern Lebanon, Tareq Masarweh said.

The writer said that by arranging for the Moscow meetings, the U.S. administration was trying to fool the Arabs, forcing them to normalise their relations with Israel without getting back their rights and lands.

However, a columnist in Al Dostour cautioned the Arabs to take a united position at the Moscow parley, lest they should risk losing their rights.

Munes Al Razzaz said that inter-Arab differences resulting from the Gulf crisis should end as soon as possible because Israel is the only party gaining from these differences, and it

could be exploiting them at the Moscow meeting.

A columnist in Al Ra'i daily said that Jordan has vital interest in attending the Moscow multinational negotiations. Fahd Al Fanek said that the Moscow conference was the long-awaited international parley which was sought since Israel occupied Palestinian land in 1967; yet Jordan can by no means reach a separate agreement with Israel through this parley but would direct the world's attention on a wider scale on the need for Israel to withdraw from occupied Arab territories in Jordan, Syria and Lebanon.

The writer said that Jordan, along with the other Arab parties, can utilise the Moscow meeting to highlight such issues as Israel's possession of nuclear and chemical weapons, its occupation of Arab lands and its inhuman treatment of Palestinians.

Turning attention to the situation in Israel, Al Dostour daily said that the Israelis have created the problem of a general election in order to escape the prospect of complying with the requirements of a just peace and escape from having to face the moment of truth. The paper said that the Shamir government has created a political storm inside the Jewish state to divert world public opinion from Israel's intransigent position at the Washington peace talks.

A columnist in Sawt Al Shaab agreed, and said that not only the elections question but also the recent escalation

of Israeli inhuman practices, the deportation of Arabs and the detention of many others in the occupied lands have added up to the Israeli obstacles laid in the path of peace.

Samir Nayfeh said that to make life more miserable for the Palestinians, the Israeli government has unleashed the armed settlers to cause damage to Arab property or kill Arabs, so causing further complications for any peaceful settlement.

Issa Scheibi, who writes for Al Dostour has a different opinion. He said that the political parties crisis emerging in Israel came as a surprise to Mr. Shamir's government. The writer said that this time the Likud Party, which leads the present coalition, has been forced to look around for solutions to the crisis which was imposed on Israel as a result of the peace process.

In the coming elections, the writer said, the Israeli voters would clearly express their desire whether to hold on to occupied Arab lands, in defiance of the world; the whole election episode, he said, could be conducive to the achievement of real peace.

Turning attention to Libya, a columnist in Sawt Al Shaab criticised the recent U.N. Security Council resolution against Libya describing the council as a tool in the hands of the U.S.-NATO alliance helping to serve Western interests alone.

Salameh Ekour said that this Security Council is expected at any moment to issue a resolution giving the green light to the U.S., France and Britain to launch an aggression on Libya following its call on the Libyan government to hand those allegedly involved in the Pan Am aircraft affair.

The writer said that the Western nations have no proof that Libya was behind the Pan Am crash of 1988, but still

France, Britain and the U.S. are going ahead with provocations against Tripoli, paving the way for a new aggression against the Arab World.

His views are supported by Bader Abdul Haq, a columnist writing for Al Ra'i daily. He said that Libya was now at the top of a list of countries facing aggression from the United States and its allies. What the Western nations require from Libya is total capitulation or a devastating aggression such as the one directed against Iraq in January 1991.

The latest U.N. Security Council Resolution, No. 731, against Libya, calling on Tripoli to cooperate with the Western countries, has placed Tripoli in a very dangerous position because it leaves the option of open aggression to the U.S., Britain, and France, said Ahmad Dhuban in Sawt Al Shaab.

The writer said that these Western powers succeed in another aggression against the Arabs, there might come a time when the American embassies in the Arab World would order the Arab regimes to hand over to the West any journalist or writer who dares to criticise the U.S. aggression.

Turning to the situation in Iraq, a columnist in Al Ra'i daily said that the continued sanctions imposed on the Iraqi people mean that the U.S. administration is very afraid that Iraq would rise up again threatening the colonial powers' interest in the region.

Ibrahim Al Absi said that by starving the Iraqi people, the Americans hope to stifle the voices of the other Arabs who are indeed silent and are not extending a helping hand to the Iraqis. The writer said that all the Arab states are bound to have a very grim future unless they extend a helping hand to the Iraqi people facing the onslaught of continued aggression.

The Western countries have lately stepped up efforts to topple Saddam Hussein and they are seeking the help of Arab states to do that simply in view of the fact that neither the armed aggression nor the sanctions have helped to get rid of the Iraqi ruler, said Bader Abdul Haq in Al Ra'i daily. The writer said that the American president hopes to topple Saddam Hussein so that the American voters elect him again for a new term at the White House and so the American public can continue to believe all the lies fabricated against Iraq and Arab people. Mr. Bush's policy regarding Iraq was also discussed by Tareq Masarweh in Al Ra'i daily. The writer said that Mr. Bush, who has already lost credibility at home, is desperately trying to win part of it back through his reiteration that his forces came out victorious in their atrocities against Iraq or by seeking to topple Saddam Hussein.

The writer said that the Arab masses support Iraq and its leadership in the face of this open aggression and believe that American conspiracies will eventually face defeat.

The United States faced yet another attack from Fahd Al Fanek, a columnist writing in Al Ra'i daily. In its war against the Arabs, the U.S. has succeeded in killing one quarter of a million Arabs and the sanctions are bound to kill many more.

The writer said that the killing of innocent people will hang heavily on the consciousness of the Americans and their president, who are only striving to defend Israel's interest in the region.

The situation in Algeria was discussed by several papers. In Sawt Al Shaab, Salameh Ekour criticised the scrapping of the elections as an arbitrary

move on the part of the rulers. The writer said that as long as the Algerian people have chosen their representatives and the way to live, the regime has no right to try to stifle their voice at a time when the rulers are accused of being responsible for the deteriorating economic and social conditions in the country.

Another columnist in Sawt Al Shaab criticised the Western media for painting a gloomy picture of Algeria since the Islamic Salvation Front took over the reins of government in Algiers.

Samir Qitami said that Algeria, which fought the French colonialists and lost one million men and women in the war of independence, can by no means try to destabilise the security of other nations. What is happening in Algeria is an internal affair in which the outsiders should not interfere, the writer said.

Turning to domestic issues, a columnist in Al Ra'i raised the question of the long due earth dams which the Ministry of Water and Irrigation had promised to build in order to collect rain water. Nazih said that much rain water is being wasted due to lack of sufficient number of dams to hold it for irrigation in the dry seasons.

A columnist in Al Dostour praised the government for allowing so many private universities to open in the Kingdom.

The decision to open more universities could be one of the most successful ones ever taken by Jordan since its independence, said Abdullah Al Malki. The writer said that at least 5,000 students are now here as a result of these important decision, saving at least \$35 million in hard currency that would have been otherwise spent on paying tuition abroad.

Kuwait's dithering emir puts chandeliers before democracy

By Andrew Hogg

KUWAIT CITY — It is said that the only quick decision the emir of Kuwait ever made was when he leapt into his Mercedes and roared across the border as Iraqi tanks trundled towards his palace.

Now, safely installed back among his gold taps and glittering chandeliers in an American-led coalition, the elusive emir is once again dithering, trying to fend off a restless people's demands for reform and greater democracy.

This causes particular irritation to Aishah Al Yahya, a household name in the Gulf. Milboms tune in daily to her family affairs radio programme. But she is more than a media celebrity in Kuwait: to her compatriots she is a heroine.

When the Iraqi army seized Kuwait 18 months ago, she behaved like a true patriot. Not short of money — her imposing mansion and chunky gold jewelry attests to that — she could have joined the long convoy of affluent Kuwaitis across the desert to Saudi Arabia. But Aishah, 38, decided to stay put and join the resistance.

While the Kuwaiti royal family sat out the war in a luxurious hotel in a mountain resort in Saudi Arabia, Aishah was brav-



The emir of Kuwait

ing Iraqi guns to take food supplies to friends.

While the emir denounced enemy abuses from outside the range of Saddam missiles, Aishah was living in constant danger. She put her life at risk by inviting Kuwaiti resistance fighters to camp out in her home: she used sandwiches and cigarettes to get past Iraqi guards to smuggle supplies to families too terrified to venture out.

And while the ruler of Kuwait was still weighing the risk of returning to his ravaged country weeks after the war had ended, Aishah was faithfully helping to rebuild it.

It seems the height of ingratitude, but her loyalty and patriotism has as yet gone unrewarded by the Kuwaiti royals. Not that she is asking for much: just the rights of a citizen to vote in an election, a privilege denied by law to all Kuwaiti women.

Sheikh Jaber Al Ahmad Al Sabah, the emir, has indicated he may design to consider the topic of female emancipation in the next few weeks, his busy agenda permitting. It is hoped, at least, that he might get round to it before the elections expected to take place later this year.

But true to her combative spirit honed in the months of the war, Aishah has decided not to wait for the emir to make up his mind. She has thrown down the gauntlet by announcing her candidacy for election to the Kuwaiti parliament, a move she admits is premature, given the ban on women casting a ballot, let alone running for public office.

But she wants to concentrate the much-burdened mind of the emir, so that, in his munificence, he may see reason. "Kuwaiti

women did a great deal during the invasion," she said last week. "They carried communications, transported weapons and planted car bombs. They led demonstrations and were murdered by the Iraqis as a result. Now we deserve a say in the running of the country."

A year after the start of Desert Storm, Aishah's voice is just one of many raised against the ruling Al Sabah family, whose flight during the invasion and performance since has eroded much of the public's once-blind faith in their rule.

The emir, who suspended the last, all-male parliament in 1986 when it became too voluble, is therefore taking a gamble in agreeing to elections. But it is also a gamble for the opposition, an unlikely alliance of Western-educated democrats and women's groups on the one hand, and Islamic fundamentalists on the other. Somehow they will have to counter the patronage and subsidies with which the Al Sabahs have traditionally bought support.

After Aishah's announcement, cracks quickly developed in the alliance. The fundamentalists, intent on imposing Sharia (Islamic law), say they accept the principle of votes for women, but believe there are more urgent priorities.

"Maybe in future women should have the vote but at the moment it would confuse the electorate," said Ahmad Baqir, a leader of the fundamentalist Salafine group, at a diwaniya, in which men sit around drinking tea and discussing public affairs.

He was referring in part to the need to reestablish political pluralism as well as the appalling problems of reconstruction. True, Kuwait's oil fires are out and Chevrolets once again rule the highways. The international hotels and shopping malls are back in action, allowing window-shopping Bangladeshi maids to gawp in frustrated awe.

But the glitz is superficial: real reconstruction is taking place agonisingly slowly, in no small part due to the greed of the Al Sabahs. The souks in the old city have not been rebuilt, nor have numerous burnt-out offices. The surrounding desert is littered with wrecked tanks, artillery pieces and ruined cars stolen by Iraqi soldiers trying to flee.

The slow progress in the desert is understandable: the battlefields are alive with mines and submunitions — explosive devices dropped by allied planes in batches of up to 400, many of which failed to explode.

However, the lack of progress in restoring Kuwait City to its

former glory is difficult to comprehend. It is common knowledge that the emir's first priority on returning was to replace the ruined chandeliers in his seafaring palace.

Some believe the problem is more than a simple lack of purpose. "The Al-Sabahs use privilege for personal and family interest," said Abdullah Nibari, secretary-general of the opposition Democratic Forum. "Many have companies competing for government business and of course they have the edge over other contractors. Whenever they get a contract, they fail to execute it in accordance with the terms. If something was supposed to be completed in two years, you will find it takes four or five with nobody able to effect the penalty clauses."

Now it's worse than ever. They feel they can exploit this predicament to their own advantage. Since liberation, they are reaping what they can from the reconstruction process.

There is also the xenophobia that set in after liberation, cutting a swath through the traditional workforce. Western expatriates have suffered; some have had to repay hardship money they received during the occupation. But their woes, generally expressed over an E and T (Ethanol and

tonic), a drink made from computer cleaning-fluid to beat the alcohol ban, pale into insignificance beside those of the hapless Palestinians.

Before the invasion, there were more than 400,000 in Kuwait. Now the numbers have shrunk to fewer than 50,000: when the Palestine Liberation Organisation backed the Iraqi regime, Palestinians paid the price. Some colluded with the invaders, but even those who did not have been ostracised.

Today, rows of deserted apartment blocks in every suburb point to the enforced exodus of a people who formed the middle class in Kuwait, the managers, tradesmen and skilled workers. "During the occupation I took food to my Kuwaiti employers and made sure the Iraqis didn't wreck their offices," said Habib Nunu, 49, a Palestinian who flew out yesterday to join his family in Jordan. "This was my home for 31 years and now I have lost everything."

— The Sunday Times



MI6 puts its agents back on the beat

By Uzi Mahnaimi

IT looked at first like part of everyday life in South Lebanon: a European tourist, escorted by his Lebanese driver, stops in the forest to talk with a monk, perhaps to ask directions to a monastery.

But to the suspicious Israeli army patrol, nothing is ever as it seems, particularly in southern Lebanon, near the border of the security zone. An intelligence officer approached the European, asking him to identify himself. Speaking fluent Arabic, the European at first pretended to be Lebanese and then, seeing that the Israelis were unconvinced, changed his story to say that he was doing "research on behalf of a Beirut cultural institute."

His suspicions apparently confirmed, the Israeli intelligence officer arrested the European and phoned back to headquarters with details of his documents. To his surprise, the suspect was identified as an officer of Britain's Secret Intelligence Service, MI6. Headquarters ordered the man's immediate release.

The Israelis had stumbled on more than a secret rendezvous. It was evidence of a new development in British espionage: the return to traditional spying techniques.

It might seem unnecessary with the demise of the cold war, but following a post-Gulf war evaluation of its intelligence performance, Britain has begun recruiting more spies to work in the field, intelligence experts say. Attention has focused in particular on the Middle East, a traditional battlefield for secret agents, amid growing concerns over nuclear proliferation, terrorism and "ogue regimes capable of disrupting the world's oil supplies.

For many years, "humint", or human intelligence, has been a British strength. "That's the

reason we get invited to the party," said one British intelligence source. "Quite simply, for our size we have the best sources in the business."

But like other agencies, including the CIA, Britain has come to rely heavily on technology, particularly satellites, for gathering its information. This was shown to be insufficient during the Gulf war and MI6 and the CIA now concede they need to get more men back into the field.

During the Gulf war, a key role was played by Britain's GCHQ signals intelligence operation at Cheltenham. The organisation, working closely with the American National Security Agency, gathered much of the intelligence from one of its bases in Cyprus. It also spearheaded the long and frustrating hunt for the hostages in Lebanon.

But the war made clear that such technology could provide only part of the picture: oo west-

ern intelligence agency was able to accurately predict Iraqi President Saddam Hussein's invasion of Kuwait; during the war, no accurate information was available about Saddam Hussein's strategy or what the men close to him were thinking, let alone his whereabouts.

The lack of a reliable mole inside Saddam Hussein's inner circle was an extraordinary lapse, given the hundreds of Iraqi officers who had been trained in the west and were approachable for recruiting.

Both Gates, the head of American intelligence, has indicated that he intends to follow Britain's example of recruiting more spies.

In a speech last month, he said the United States was in the process of "expanding our human intelligence capabilities, in recognition that responding to requirements on proliferation, terrorism, counter narcotics, forecasting intentions, and more, depends heavily on improved human intelligence."

Meanwhile, Mossad, the Israeli intelligence service, is eager to improve relations with its British counterpart, hoping to share information on possible terrorist threats. "MI6 are the best intelligence service in the Middle East," said one Israeli intelligence source.

"They have a traditional heritage of espionage work in this part of the world. The Arabs think the British are more reliable than the Americans. For some of them, London is still the centre of the world and Britain still an empire."

In the meantime, the Israeli border patrol will be on the lookout for intruders with dubious accents. But they might not all be British: other western intelligence services are no doubt eager to recruit a monk of their own — The Sunday Times.



1993 inaugural unlikely to bring major change in U.S. policy

By Gene Gibbons
Reuter

WASHINGTON — Despite the sound and fury rumbling from presidential candidates, a review of the rhetoric and a look at the political landscape suggest there will be few big changes in U.S. policy no matter who takes office on January 20, 1993.

Political pragmatism — a savvy appreciation of what can be done and what cannot, what Americans will accept and what they won't — not ideology drives President George Bush and all his major rivals except Republican conservative Patrick Buchanan.

Mr. Buchanan could cause Mr. Bush some embarrassment in the February 18 New Hampshire primary election by stirring an economic backlash vote with his "America first" campaign. But few analysts of any stripe doubt Mr. Bush will win the republican nomination for a second four-year term.

Whether Mr. Bush or his eventual democratic rival — presumably one of five major contenders now in that party's nomination

race — win on November 3, it seems likely the difference in terms of impact on major domestic and foreign policies will be in tone and detail rather than the substance or direction.

Mr. Bush and the two Democrats seem most likely to secure the party's nomination — Arkansas Governor Bill Clinton and Nebraska senator Bob Kerrey — favour tax cuts to pull the country out of recession, although they differ on specifics.

Former California Governor Jerry Brown, rated a longshot for the Democratic nomination, is the most extreme with his call for a flat general tax of up to 14 per cent on gross income.

Such a scheme has been discussed for years. It has never gone anywhere.

There is a big difference between Mr. Bush and the Democrats on America's most controversial social issue — a woman's right to abortion, where the Democrats back a right of choice and Mr. Bush favours a constitutional amendment to ban abortions.

But national abortion policy is

basically set — in law — by the Supreme Court, not by the president.

The court is expected to rule this year or next on cases challenging a landmark 1973 decision that legalised abortion.

Mr. Bush and the Democrats also differ on other social issues ranging from an employers' right to permanently replace striking workers to a worker's right to parental leave.

But these are marginal compared to what could emerge as the super-issue of the 1990s — national health insurance.

Mr. Bush, who promises a proposal soon, is expected to back more modest federal involvement than the Democrats.

But the Democrats themselves have not reached anything like a consensus on this issue, which in any event will surely require a laborious bipartisan compromise in Congress and between Congress and White House somewhere down the road.

The sheer prospective expense and the political dynamics of the issue — an ageing population, a powerful health lobby and a

national bias against anything that smacks of socialised medicine — are more likely to influence the end result than the identity of the White House occupant.

On the foreign policy front, there is evidence of a general convergence of views among the major candidates.

That is so even on this year's hottest campaign foreign policy topic, the U.S. trade imbalance with Japan and others. Free-trader Bush has bowed to economic and political pressure and moved towards a more muscular U.S. trade policy.

On the other side, in any case, the Democrats currently leading the polls in the crucial opening New Hampshire primary — Clinton and former Massachusetts Senator Paul Tsongas — are closer to Mr. Bush's general free-trade philosophy. Of those who lean more towards tough Japan-bashing protectionism, the strongest current runner appears to be Mr. Kerrey.

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Financial Markets

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U.S. Dollar in International Markets

Currency	New York Close	Tokyo Close
Sterling Pound	1.8060	1.8051
Deutsche Mark	1.5895	1.4097
Swiss Franc	1.4090	1.5915
French Franc	5.4180	5.4225 **
Japanese Yen	123.35	123.26
European Currency Unit	1.2530	1.2833 **

LSD Per 100

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Currency	1 MTH	3 MTHS	6 MTHS	12 MTHS
U.S. Dollar	4.06	4.06	4.06	4.37
Sterling Pound	10.50	10.50	10.31	10.18
Deutsche Mark	9.43	9.43	9.25	9.12
Swiss Franc	7.50	7.50	7.45	4.31
French Franc	9.87	9.75	9.66	9.50
Japanese Yen	5.34	5.00	4.71	4.61
European Currency Unit	10.18	10.22	10.06	9.64

Interbank bid rates for amounts exceeding 1 U.S. Dollars 1,000,000 or equivalent

Metal	USD/Oz	JD/Gm	Metal	USD/Oz	JD/Gm
Gold	399.05	6.65	Silver	4.34	.093

Central Bank of Jordan Exchange Rate Bulletin Date: 23/1/1992

Currency	Bid	Offer
U.S. Dollar	0.6760	0.6760
Sterling Pound	1.2183	1.2244
Deutsche Mark	0.4245	0.4266
Swiss Franc	0.4792	0.4816
French Franc	0.1945	0.1951
Japanese Yen	0.5480	0.5507
Dutch Guilder	0.3749	0.3766
Swedish Krona	0.1166	0.1174
Italian Lira	0.0564	0.0567
Belgian Franc	0.02062	0.02072

Per 100

Currency	Bid	Offer
Bahraini Dinar	1.7640	1.7720
Lebanese Lira	0.0769	0.0775
Saudi Riyal	0.1799	0.1813
Kuwaiti Dinar	-	-
Qatari Riyal	0.1631	0.1644
Egyptian Pound	0.2000	0.2100
Omani Riyal	1.7300	1.7410
UAE Dirham	0.1831	0.1844
Greek Drachma	0.3650	0.3700
Cypriot Pound	1.4850	1.5010

Per 100

Index	21/1/1992 Close	22/1/1992 Close
All-Share	135.18	135.16
Banking Sector	109.66	110.09
Insurance Sector	131.41	131.46
Industry Sector	167.77	166.93
Services Sector	149.67	150.46

December 31, 1990 = 100

LONDON EXCHANGE RATES

LONDON (R) — Following are the buying and selling rates for leading world currencies and gold against the dollar at midsession on the London foreign exchange and bullion markets Friday.

One Sterling	1.7790/7800	U.S. dollars
One U.S. dollar	1.1653/63	Canadian dollar
	1.6088/98	Deutsche marks
	1.8135/45	Dutch guilders
	1.4405/15	Swiss francs
	33.16/20	Belgian francs
	5.4870/20	French francs
	1212/1213	Italian lire
	124.20/30	Japanese yen
	5.8525/75	Swedish crowns
	6.3200/50	Norwegian crowns
	6.2420/70	Danish crowns
One ounce of gold	354.40/354.90	U.S. dollars

Japan's trade surplus swells anew

TOKYO (R) — Japan's narrowing trade surplus reversed course spectacularly in 1991, surging by half and ending four years of steady declines in the much-criticised overhang.

The bad news for Japan's trade partners was tempered by a near-stationary surplus with the United States, Tokyo's loudest critic.

Japan's overall customs-cleared trade surplus widened to \$78.23 billion in calendar 1991 from \$52.15 billion a year earlier, the finance ministry has said.

The 1991 surplus with the United States stood at \$38.45 billion against \$37.95 billion in 1990.

"1991 was a bit of an odd cookie," said Jesper Koll, chief economist at S.G. Warburg Securities (Japan) Inc. "But the outlook for 1992 is very dark."

He and other economists said Japan's weak economy laid the foundation for this year's sharp increase, but that 1991 also saw several one-off factors that exaggerated the trend.

Japan's economy, which grew at a 5.5 per cent pace in 1990-91 ending March, is forecast to have grown at only a 3.7 per cent pace in 1991/92 and further declines are seen in fiscal 1992/93.

"Since the collapse of the bubble economy an inflated element of the economy has been eliminated, so if we can reduce the trade imbalance, this would be a real reduction," Noboru Hatakeyama, vice-minister for international affairs at the ministry of international trade and industry, said.

So far, Japan is making little progress towards that end. Imports climbed only 0.7 per cent in the year to \$236.37 billion, while exports leapt 9.6 per cent to \$314.60 billion.

Heavy buying of gold and high oil prices in 1990 helped to drive Japan's imports sharply higher, making 1991 look low in comparison.

Japan is pinning its hope for containing the trade gap on stronger economic growth.

Economists say Tokyo has virtually promised the United States that Japan's economy will achieve 3.5 per cent economic growth in fiscal 1992/93, a level negotiators on both sides of the Pacific hope will lead to more imports.

"Bilateral trade friction will prevent a further sharp increase in exports to the U.S.," said Hidehiro Iwaki, senior economist at Nomura Research Institute Ltd.

Highlighting the growth trend in Japan's trade surplus were December figures that showed the biggest increase on record, climbing to \$10.01 billion from \$5.44 billion a year ago.

December exports climbed 4.2 per cent year-on-year for the 19th consecutive monthly increase to \$29.56 billion while import growth fell 14.7 per cent to \$19.55 billion.

Economists said much of the monthly gain reflected oil, which cost about a third less in 1991 than a year before.

Private economists and even the usually optimistic finance ministry expect the surplus to worsen before it improves.

Conceding that the surplus will continue to show year-on-year increases in coming months, a finance ministry official told reporters: "I don't think that Japan's trade surplus is on a trend heading for a rapid increase."

Japan's economy is not expected to start growing until the second half of 1992 and low oil prices should continue to deflate imports for at least the next few months.

While the effect of a stronger yen should eventually further stimulate imports, Japan may still have to contend with possible stronger exports — a fearsome prospect for Japan during an election year in the United States.

Australia's Keating launches recovery drive



Paul Keating

MELBOURNE (R) — Prime Minister Paul Keating, in power for over a month, has appealed to business and union leaders for ideas to pull Australia out of a year-long recession.

Seventeen chief executives from top companies plus heads of small businesses and trade unions have strided at regular intervals into Mr. Keating's office in Melbourne, offering plans for economic salvation.

"This is the stuff of the real

fight back... the one that restores growth in the economy, strengthens the infrastructure base and continues to give us a place in the world of trading nations," Mr. Keating told reporters.

Mr. Keating and his team, striving to revive the economy in time to give Labour a fighting chance against conservatives at the next election due by May 1993, took capious notes.

If Mr. Keating receives a magic formula from the meetings, or from three follow-up discussions over the next week, it will emerge in an economic statement due in about six weeks.

"Some loosening of fiscal policy is necessary and a broader mix of fiscal and monetary policies than we have seen in recent years," said John Prescott, chief executive of the Broken Hill Pty Co. Ltd., Australia's largest company.

"My views are that we are still in a fairly deep recession and we are not seeing signs of an upturn at this time," Mr. Prescott said after meeting Mr. Keating. Asked by reporters whether Mr. Keating had indicated his willingness to ease the recession by government spending, Mr. Prescott said: "I think he did indicate that, yes."

For Mr. Keating, who became prime minister on Dec. 19 after ousting Bob Hawke, holding the meetings is as important as achieving results.

Mr. Keating's line was that under Mr. Hawke, who kept Labour in power since 1983, the government lacked drive and leadership and became stuck in the rarefied political atmosphere of the isolated capital, Canberra, populated mostly by public servants.

Industry wants up to 20 per cent of new export earnings to be free of tax, plus tax breaks for stock depreciation, changes to conservation and aboriginal rights' legislation to give freer access to land for mining, and tax revenue diverted into a development fund for manufacturing.

Unions seek greater government spending on projects such as roads and railways in order to create jobs.

The value of the local dollar has plunged from 78 U.S. cents in mid-December to a three-year low of 73.52 U.S. cents last week, partly due to market fears of over-stimulation of the economy.

With economic problems running deep and options limited, Mr. Keating has made it clear the government will maintain its traditional "fiscal reticence" in its economic statement.

Releasing the fiscal brake could spoil the one economic bright spot, an inflation rate of 3.3 per cent which is low by international standards and helps keep interest rates down.

"It's a fine balancing act," said

Sudan will not export its sorghum

KHARTOUM (R) — Finance Minister Abdul Rahim Hamdi has said Sudan would not export any of its sorghum harvest of three million tonnes this year nor would it fix domestic prices.

Mr. Hamdi said in a statement the state-owned Agricultural Bank had decided against buying the staple food as had in the past. There has enough grain to meet the needs of the country, he added.

Mr. Hamdi said he had given permission to the World Food Programme to buy 100,000 tonnes of grain locally.

Agriculture Minister Ahmad Gineif said this year's grain production amounted to four million tonnes, including the sorghum harvest.

India set to tackle loss-making state firms

NEW DELHI (R) — India is preparing to grapple with the latest reform of an economy steeped in four decades of socialism — how to rehabilitate or close down chronically inefficient public sector industries.

The government has held talks with representatives of India's powerful trade unions and managers of public sector industries on restructuring the public sector.

The government has already allocated 2.5 billion rupees (\$100 million) to finance an employee compensation and retraining programme called the National Renewal Fund (NRF).

The World Bank has promised a \$500 million concessional loan for the 1992/93 fiscal year (April-March), in part to provide funding for the NRF.

According to a paper prepared for the talks, 58 public sector units, employing more than 400,000 people, have been identified as chronically loss-making enterprises.

The total cost of restructuring these units and assisting their workers would be about 60 billion rupees (\$2.4 billion), it said.

The government has referred 50 of these to the board for industrial and financial reconstruction for rehabilitation or termination.

"The dimension of the problem is large," the paper said.

According to the Reserve Bank of India, 186,441 units in the small scale sector and 1,418 in the medium and large sectors were listed as sick, as of the end of September 1989.

One proposal under study is for the government to write off all the loans it has made to loss-making manufacturing companies and divest its equity at zero cost, provided it does not have to finance any further losses.

Last July, the government initiated drastic economic reforms.

These included abolishing most industrial licences, allowing foreign investors a majority stake in Indian companies, a steep devaluation of the Indian rupee and partial privatisation of public sector undertakings.

The government in the 1991/92 budget also announced that it would set off 20 per cent of the equity in selected public sector enterprises.

It has yet to identify the industries, whose shares would be sold to state-run mutual funds and ultimately offered to the public on the nation's stock markets.

Britain imports old tin cans from U.S. and Canada

WARRINGTON, England (R) — A British recycling plant is importing millions of old tin cans from North America. The reason: British consumers haven't adopted the environmentally friendly habit of saving used drink-cans. The British Alcan plant in Warrington, northern England, plans to import a billion cans a year from the United States and Canada, where consumers save 60 per cent of their old drink-cans cans, compared with only 10 per cent of Britons.

Recession halves sales of big auction houses

LONDON (AP) — The world's two leading auction houses, Sotheby's and Christie's, have reported that art sales have been halved by the worldwide recession.

U.S.-owned Sotheby's announced international sales last year of \$638.7 million (\$1.03 billion), down by more than half from \$1.39 billion (\$2.446 billion) last year.

British-owned Christie's suffered a similar fall, with 1991 sales at \$580 million (\$1 billion) compared with \$1.1 billion (\$1.9 billion) in 1990.

"Total sales this season were severely affected by adverse economic conditions," said Lord Carrington, Christie's chairman. He said depressed demand for impressionist and modern pictures added to the slump.

Christie's said its main board directors would defer 20 per cent of their pay and that a pay freeze for other directors and senior managers announced in July would continue.

Sotheby's said it was not imposing any pay cuts but a pay freeze would remain in place.

Michael Ainslie, Sotheby's chief executive, said in a statement that last year saw the reemergence of decorative arts as a dominant factor in the firm's sales, accounting for 55 per cent of the overall total.

"Despite a downturn in worldwide auction activity these sales have helped us to remain profitable and retain our world leadership role in 1991," Mr. Ainslie said.

NCSA agreed last October to study plans to buy seven oil tankers at a cost of three billion rupees (\$800 million) to modernise its fleet and carry Saudi crude to international markets.

Established in 1977, NCSA has a fleet of 13 oil tankers and eight cargo ships.

GIB returns to profit

MANAMA, Bahrain (R) — The Bahrain-based Gulf International Bank (GIB) has posted a net profit of \$46.45 million in 1991, compared with a net loss of \$422.42 million in 1990. It said total assets fell to \$5.858 billion in 1991 from \$6.593 billion a year earlier. It attributed the drop to reduced business after fighting broke out between Iraq and the U.S.-led alliance in early 1991. GIB is owned by the governments of Kuwait, Iraq, Bahrain, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and Oman, the Abu Dhabi Investment Authority and the Gulf Investment Corporation.

In December, 1991 to 500 million rupees (\$133.3 million) from 200 million (\$53.3 million).

He predicted demands for petrochemical and chemical products would increase in future and consequently, "there will be an increase on the demand for transportation of such products."

"The main objective for which the company was incorporated is to transport national exports," he said.

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CIS welcomes new aid deal

MOSCOW (R) — Members of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) welcomed a new aid deal from the West Friday despite doubts whether the right goods were being sent in the right way to tackle the crisis.

Alexander Zhitnikov, deputy head of Russia's Commission for Coordinating Humanitarian Aid, questioned plans for a \$61 million U.S. airlift of food and medicines.

"Of course we need aid urgently and of course we are very thankful," he told Reuters by telephone. "But the main thing is to begin the process straight away and to use other means of transportation as much as possible."

The airlift, to start on Feb. 10, was pledged at a two-day conference in Washington which ended Thursday on coordinating help to the former Soviet republics.

The United States and other countries also promised new humanitarian aid and soft loans worth over \$2 billion.

A spokesman for Ukraine, a major food producer within the Commonwealth, indicated food aid was not its top priority.

"We are very grateful for the U.S. aid," said Vladimir Chorny,

head of the Information Department of the Ukrainian Foreign Ministry. "But at the same time our greatest need is U.S. technology and U.S. expertise."

Mr. Zhitnikov said an airlift would probably bring less than 10,000 tonnes of aid to each of the 31 regions of Russia where goods were in drastically short supply.

Earlier this month, using stronger language, he had said the millions of tonnes of aid required could only arrive by rail or road.

"We need huge quantities of aid, we do not need 100 parcels sent by air and accompanied by 60 people," he said then.

"Donors would do better to give us the money they spend on jet fuel and let us buy goods on world markets."

The airlifted aid, to be flown in by U.S. military planes at a cost of \$5 million, will comprise supplies of food and medicines surplus to Pentagon stocks from the Gulf war.

"It can vividly show the people of the former Soviet Union that those that once prepared for war with them now have the courage and the conviction to use

their militaries to say 'we will wage a new peace.'" U.S. Secretary of State James Baker said at the end of the conference.

In addition, U.S. President George Bush has promised to ask Congress for a further \$645 million of aid, bringing the total U.S. aid contribution to over \$5 billion.

South Korea pledged \$800 million and Thailand \$450 million in concessional loans. Oman pledged \$200 million to help Azerbaijan develop its oil industry.

The European Community has promised a huge aid package to prop up Russia's price reform plans and head off social unrest.

Commonwealth officials have asked the West to pump in humanitarian aid on an unprecedented scale.

Russia has also asked for a multi-billion-dollar fund to stabilise the rouble and prepare the ground for it to become convertible.

Further help is needed to overcome balance of payments problems and help the country crawl out of the economic mire, Russian officials say.

But the conference, which delegates described as a useful first step in coordinating a piecemeal international aid effort, dealt with humanitarian issues rather than other plans.

A follow-up conference in Lisbon sponsored by the European Community is to be held in May. Japan has offered to host a third meeting.

Frans Andriessen, the EC's External Affairs Commissioner, said new financing to plug a yawning balance of payments gap would have to be broached when the donors meet in Lisbon.

The main problems facing donors of foreign aid include assessing where aid should go and ensuring it reaches its destination.

Commonwealth officials pledged to do their best to ensure supplies got through despite poor distribution networks and bureaucratic red tape.

"We express our gratitude to the U.S. for relief aid which we badly need," Igor Romanov, head of the presidential press office in Kazakhstan, said by telephone. "We will do our best to guarantee the relief reaches the proper addresses."



F.W. de Klerk

De Klerk: Whites must approve reforms

CAPE TOWN, South Africa (AP) — President F.W. de Klerk said Friday the white minority must approve any plan to share power with blacks, while thousands of blacks marched outside parliament to demand political rights.

Mr. De Klerk told the annual opening of parliament that when a new, non-racial constitution is negotiated in the next year or two, both blacks and whites would have the chance to vote on it in a referendum.

It would mark the first time that blacks would be allowed to vote in a national ballot.

But De Klerk reiterated a promise that the white electorate would have to approve any constitutional changes that would extend political rights to the 30-million black majority.

"The government still stands by this. We are honour bound to hold a referendum," he said.

The president said the government would weigh the overall vote, but "I wish to emphasise that only parliament, as constituted at present, has the power to amend the present constitution."

The current tri-cameral parliament consists of the dominant white chamber as well as houses for Asians and people of mixed-race. Blacks are excluded.

Mr. De Klerk made similar remarks in December, when leading black and white groups opened preliminary talks on a new constitution that would end apartheid.

Mr. De Klerk does not have to call an election until 1994 and considers that his deadline for negotiating a new constitution that extends voting rights to blacks.

There was speculation that Mr. De Klerk might propose interim measures that would soon bring blacks into the national government while a new constitution is negotiated.

He referred briefly to a "transitional government" that would include black parties, but he did not offer any specifics or timetables.

As Mr. De Klerk spoke, about 15,000 blacks marched on parliament to demand the immediate formation of an interim, non-racial government. "Heavily armed police, backed by armoured vehicles and water cannons, ringed the parliament."

"It must be the last time a racist parliament is opened," African National Congress Deputy President Walter Sisulu said to loud cheers.

Kashmir rebels hit top Indian security men

SRINAGAR, India (R) — Kashmiri militants injured at least eight top Indian security officials with a blast in the office of the police chief of the Himalayan region Friday.

Police officials said three were seriously hurt as they met to discuss security for a nightingale "unity procession" heading for Srinagar, summer capital of Jammu and Kashmir, India's only Muslim-majority state.

Muslim militants fighting against Indian rule of Kashmir have vowed none of those on the procession will leave the Kashmir Valley alive.

Kashmir police chief J.N. Saxena was one of those critically hurt along with M.K. Singh, head of the Central Reserve Police Force who was not expected to live, and Ashok Patel, head of the Border Security Force.

All had to be dug out of the rubble that was all that was left of Mr. Saxena's office by the explosion.

The Central Reserve and Border Security Forces are both national paramilitary organisations. The former is used to reinforce local police while the latter tackles anti-insurgency operations.

An indefinite curfew was immediately imposed on Srinagar, hotbed of a revolt that erupted two years ago, and the army was called in. Dozens of army vehicles headed into the city.

Officials initially said the rebels attacked with rockets, but said later an investigation was under way to find out whether it was a rocket or a bomb which devastated Mr. Saxena's office on the second floor of the three-storey police headquarters.

A police guard was killed in the attack, which occurred as the "unity procession" entered Jammu and Kashmir.

It also occurred as reporters met Syed Salahuddin, military head of the pro-Pakistani Hizbul Mujahideen militant group, who swore those on the Ekta Yatra, of "unity procession," would not leave the Kashmir Valley alive if they entered it.

"Come what may, we will attack the Yatra. Our people have been given the weapons. The Yatra won't be allowed to go back alive," he said.

Reuter correspondent Raju Gopalakrishnan reported that the cavalcade of cars, buses, trucks and flag-waving youths on scooters, all heavily guarded by hundreds of security men, was one mile (more than one km) long as it entered Jammu and Kashmir.

He said Muri Manohar Joshi, president of the Hindu nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) who is leading the march, expressed equal determination to press on to Srinagar to raise the Indian flag there Sunday, the country's Republic Day.

"When we raise the flag, those who used to persecute the country's unity will be destroyed. We will teach them a lesson, those who used to say 'Indians go home'," he told thousands of supporters.

How many people he would take on to Srinagar was uncertain. BJP leaders said a decision would be taken whether to heed government appeals to cut the numbers for safety's sake when Joshi reached Jammu, the state's winter capital, later Friday.

All the top leadership of the BJP, which has surged from two parliamentary seats to 119 over two elections on the tide of Hindu revivalism it has fanned, was in Jammu.

De Klerk, Mandela to share UNESCO Peace Prize

PARIS (AP) — South African President F.W. de Klerk and Nelson Mandela, president of the African National Congress, will share the \$148,000 UNESCO Peace Prize. The U.N. Scientific, Educational and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) said both men will attend the Feb. 3 ceremony to receive the award.

The prize is named for Ivory Coast President Felix Houphouët-Boigny. An international jury headed by former U.S. Secretary of State Henry Kissinger honoured Mr. Mandela and Mr. De Klerk for their efforts to end South Africa's apartheid system of racial separation. The prize honours "the actions they have taken to educate their people towards better mutual comprehension and to giving up the prejudices which would have seemed insurmountable just a few years ago," a UNESCO statement said.

I smoke too much, — De Klerk

JOHANNESBURG (R) — South African President F.W. de Klerk says he smokes too much but cigarettes help him cope with his political troubles. "I smoke too much, and I don't believe that smoking is good for you," the reformist white leader said in a state television programme about his lifestyle. "I want to stop, and am preparing myself psychologically for that step. But I won't be able to do so in the present political climate." Mr. De Klerk, overseeing reforms to South Africa's white-dominated political structure, is facing opposition demands for a faster transfer of power to the black majority.

Smugglers hid gold in car bumpers

LONDON (R) — A gang smuggled gold worth nearly \$60 million into Britain hidden behind the bumpers of cars over a four-year period, a court heard. The gang made regular trips to Europe buying more than 4.5 tonnes of gold in ingots the size of chocolate bars — probably in Luxembourg — and smuggled it back to avoid paying tax, prosecution lawyer Stuart Lawson Rogers said. They could sell the gold at a lower price than if it had been bought legitimately in Britain, he said. The gang was captured when an alleged courier was arrested at the southern port of Dover with gold in her car.

10-day-old baby dumped in garage

SYDNEY (R) — A 10-day-old baby boy was dumped in a garage with nothing but a plastic bag, rosary and cross for protection, according to a startled Australian couple who found the child after answering a knock at the door. "I thought someone had dropped off a load of washing to the wrong house," Michael Lavey told reporters Friday. "But when I opened the bag I found a beautiful baby boy — we couldn't believe it." Mr. Lavey said he and his wife Imelda were awoken by a knock on their door late Thursday night. When they walked outside their western Sydney home they found the Asian baby lying in a basin, covered with a garbage bag, a rosary and cross. There was no note, but a blue plastic bag contained extra nappies, and a baby's bottle full of milk. The Laveys said they hoped to adopt the baby, which they nicknamed Ing Chin, meaning "handsome" in Chinese.

'Stasi spied on schoolchildren'

HAMBURG, Germany (AP) — Secret police in former east Germany, who compiled vast files on tens of thousands of people in the former Communist state, even spied on schoolchildren, a news magazine said. Stern magazine, in its latest edition, claims thousands of children and teenagers considered "politically uncertain" were kept under surveillance by the now-defunct Ministry for State Security, commonly called the Stasi. The Stasi used teachers as informers, according to Stern. It cited one case involving the daughter of Angelika Barbe, a Social Democratic parliamentarian from former east Germany. While Mrs. Barbe was examining her Stasi file, she found that her daughter Henriette, now 13, was described in a June 22, 1989 letter as being "strongly pro-Western," Stern said. Since early January, the German government has allowed those victimised by the Stasi to examine their files in Berlin.

N. Korea eager to improve ties with U.S.

TOKYO (R) — North Korea said Friday it was eager to improve relations with the United States which has consistently accused the isolated Communist country of developing nuclear weapons.

An article in Pyongyang's Rodong Sinmun newspaper, carried by the official Korean Central News Agency, was quoted as saying:

"It is important to develop the already begun North Korea-U.S. contact into a dialogue for resolving the fundamental problems existing between the two countries."

The media commentary came after the two countries held their highest-level contacts since the 1950-53 Korean War in New York Wednesday.

On Thursday the news agency, monitored in Tokyo, carried a small report on the talks, saying they had been satisfactory and had been held in an "open-minded" atmosphere.

The Rodong Sinmun article said resolving problems between North Korea and the United States would "open a good prospect for the improvement of the situation on the Korean peninsula and in the Asia-Pacific region."

Japan's Kyodo News Agency quoted North Korea's top diplomat in Geneva as saying Friday that the contacts marked an improvement in negotiations toward establishing diplomatic ties with the United States.

"We sincerely requested improved relations with the United States," Mr. Li Chol, ambassador to the United Nations in Geneva, was quoted as saying.

Mr. Li said he thought negotiations would further improve with Pyongyang's signing of an agreement, expected later this month, with the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) to allow international inspections of its nuclear facilities.

Tokyo, Washington and Seoul, which believe North Korea may only be a year away from building a nuclear bomb, have pressed Pyongyang to sign the IAEA accord.

North Korea denies it is trying to make nuclear weapons.

In a separate development, a senior North Korean official said Friday North Korean President Kim Il-sung and South Korean leader Roh Tae-woo could hold a long-sought summit in the near future.

"At a time when the people's wishes for reunification are high, there is no reason to delay the summit any longer," Mr. Kim Yong-Sun, the North's Ruling Workers' Party secretary for international affairs, said in an interview with Seoul's leading JoongAng Daily News.

Mr. Kim was replying to a question whether the two leaders would hold a meeting at an early date. The newspaper said the interview was held Thursday in New York at the end of the high-level talks between the United States and North Korea.

Kim Yong-Sun, a close confidant of Kim Il-sung's son and heir apparent Kim Jong-il, led a North Korean delegation to the talks, the highest-level contacts between Pyongyang and Washington since the 1950-53 Korean War.

Mr. Kim said in the interview that the proposed inter-Korean summit should produce concrete results.

WORLD NEWS IN BRIEF

'Independent Scotland would fare better'

EDINBURGH (R) — More than half of the Scottish people want either full independence from Britain or greater autonomy, according to an opinion poll published Friday. In a poll likely to fuel a home rule campaign in forthcoming general elections, the Scottish edition of the Sun newspaper said 51 per cent of Scots thought the country would fare better if it broke or revised a link with England dating back three centuries. The Mori Poll showed that 40 per cent of Scots supported the establishment of a fully independent state, while 34 per cent wanted devolution — a separate Scottish parliament which would have wide-ranging powers but remain within the United Kingdom. Only 22 per cent wanted no change to the constitutional links set up by the 1707 union of the Scottish and English parliaments. Nationalist leader Alex Salmond — whose Scottish National Party now holds only five of the 72 Scottish seats in the British parliament — said: "The momentum for independence is fast becoming unstoppable." The Sun declared Thursday that it supported independence with a splash headline saying "rise now and be a nation again." Britain's ruling Conservative Party has traditionally opposed the idea of home rule for Scotland. But the opposition Labour Party has said it favours some measure of devolution.

U.S. 'to seek jobs' for Soviet scientists

LOS ANGELES (AP) — The United States plans to recruit about 2,000 scientists in the former Soviet Union so they won't go to work for such countries as Libya and Iran, a newspaper reported. The scientists would be paid by the United States to destroy Soviet nuclear weapons and work in civilian research, the Los Angeles Times reported Friday, quoting anonymous Bush administration sources. The proposal could be ready in time for President George Bush's State of the Union speech Tuesday, the newspaper said. Administration officials and members of Congress are concerned that key scientists in Russia and other republics might be wooed away by nations seeking to develop their own nuclear arsenals.

Clinton again denies tale of affair

NEW YORK (R) — Democratic Party presidential front-runner Bill Clinton has denied new allegations that he carried on a torrid 12-year-long extramarital affair with a night club singer. Jennifer Flowers' claims are splashed across the latest issue of Star magazine, a supermarket tabloid that last week printed claims that Mr. Clinton had affairs with five women, including the singer. The Arkansas governor has issued a series of strong denials. "The allegations in today's Star are not true," Mr. Clinton said Thursday in a statement issued by campaign staff in New Hampshire. "I have nothing to add to what I have said in the past." But the latest story in the Star — which went on sale Friday — raised media speculation that the new charges could damage Mr. Clinton's front-runner status in the Democratic race. New Hampshire's Channel 9 WMUR television broadcast results of an opinion poll conducted for the Concord Monitor newspaper which gave Mr. Clinton a 43 per cent to 36 per cent edge over President George Bush, with 21 per cent undecided.

ASEAN to boost security cooperation

SINGAPORE (R) — Ministers of the Association of South East Asian Nations have agreed to step up cooperation on regional security, until recently an area that was taboo for the 25-year old group. ASEAN officials said Friday. Foreign and economic ministers, meeting ahead of a summit by ASEAN leaders here next week, recommended increasing links with the United Nations and exploring new areas of cooperation among its members on security, the officials said. "This is a tremendous breakthrough and I think it is very good news for ASEAN," Philippine Foreign Minister Raul Manglapus said. "We were sweeping security issues under the carpet." Leaders of ASEAN — Brunei, Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore and Thailand — will keep its basic stance that it must not become a military alliance, the officials said. But with the end of the Cambodian conflict, the pullout of U.S. forces from bases in the Philippines and potential regional flashpoints such as conflicting claims on the Spratly and Paracel Islands in the South China Sea, ASEAN must seek new avenues of cooperation to ensure stability for the booming region, they said.

Clark Air Base ravaged by looting

CLARK AIR BASE, Philippines (AP) — Convoys of trucks carrying fuel, furniture and other goods roll out from this former U.S. Air Force base, ostensibly bound for Philippine military headquarters in Manila. Instead, most of the trucks head for clandestine warehouses, where their contents are unloaded and transferred through an elaborate fencing network for sale in local shops. Filipinos are systematically plundering Clark Air Base, one of the oldest and largest U.S. military installations abroad until it, and its contents, were turned over to the Philippine military last November. One Filipino officer said looting is a common practice in his country. He and fellow officers provided details, speaking in interviews this week on condition of anonymity because they fear reprisals from commanders.

Miyazawa opens diet session

TOKYO (AP) — In the face of spiralling trade tensions, Prime Minister Kiichi Miyazawa pledged anew in a major policy address Friday to increase imports and asked his countrymen to help America overcome its economic woes. Mr. Miyazawa's nationally televised speech, which opened the new session of parliament, strongly praised the United States for providing "good-hearted support" that allowed Japan to flourish after its World War II defeat. "Yet today the United States faces some problems of its own, and it behooves Japan to make every effort to cooperate with the United States as it works to overcome these problems," he said.

Zairean soldiers kill 2 on looting spree

KINSHASA (R) — Zairean soldiers demanding a 10-fold pay rise looted scores of houses in the capital Kinshasa overnight, killing at least two people, witnesses said Friday.

Armed troops raided homes in many parts of the sprawling city of three million and even robbed the national soccer squad, the Leopards, in their hotel.

Official sources said soldiers were threatening to go back on the rampage Friday night if 10-fold rises were not paid in cash by day's end.

Privates currently earn 1.5 million zaires (\$18.75 at the bank rate) a month are demanding 15 million.

A crowd of angry people whose houses were looted at gunpoint overnight demonstrated outside Kinshasa's town hall.

Witnesses said at least two civilians were killed by bullets, apparently when they tried to save their property. Looting was reported in at least four areas of the city.

The attacks came 24 hours after soldiers loyal to President Mobutu Sese Seko crushed an abortive putsch by rebel units which took control of national radio and television late Wednesday night.

The international airport at Ndjili was still closed Friday.

Witnesses said soldiers went to the hotel where the national soccer team was staying after its return from the African Nations Cup in Senegal.

"They took all the players' clothes, money and the presents they bought to Dakar," one witness said.

The looting, and the threat of more to come caused near-panic in Kinshasa, which still bears the scars of ferocious army-led pillaging last September.

Bush plans deeper nuclear missile cuts

WASHINGTON (R) — President George Bush may propose dramatic new missile cuts next week that would take a lot of bang out of the world's nuclear arsenals, according to administration officials.

They said Thursday that he could announce in a speech to Congress Tuesday that Washington is now willing to cut U.S. submarine-based missiles to prompt former Soviet republics to cut or eliminate their land-based missiles.

The officials, who asked not to be identified, said Mr. Bush wants deep cuts in land- and sea-based, multi-warhead missiles, the world's most potent and destabilising arms.

Hundreds of those missiles are each capable of carrying up to 10 warheads each of which can hit a separate target.

"I expect it will be dramatic and will represent a break with previous reluctance by the Defence Department to tinker with our submarine-based weapons," said one of the officials.

The New York Times, which first broke the story, said some cuts under study would be unilateral while others would depend on responses from four former Soviet republics with long-range missiles — Russia, Ukraine, Kazakhstan and Belarus.

The newspaper quoted Defence Department officials as saying that the Pentagon planned

to suspend production of most new weapons until the weapons are tested. The White House has tentatively approved the proposal, the daily added.

The paper said the production phase was by far the most expensive stage in buying new weapons, consuming 35 to 45 per cent of total costs. Research, design and development of prototypes usually took 20 to 25 per cent, it added.

The New York Times said the new system, which would mark a sharp departure from four decades of Pentagon spending practices, meant that purchase of weapons already in production, including the B-2 bomber and the Seawolf submarine, would be curtailed or cancelled.

It added that the longer-term effect of the decision could be greater as there would not be an automatic move from design to production of future generations of weapons.

There was no immediate administration comment on the report.

The White House and Defence Department declined to confirm or deny the report on missile cuts. But Pentagon spokesman Bob Hall said Mr. Bush "will have some things on this subject in the State of the Union message" to Congress Tuesday night.

Under the unratified 1991 U.S.-Soviet Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (START), the

U.S. arsenal of strategic nuclear warheads would be reduced from about 12,000 to 10,000 and those controlled by the former Soviet Union would go down from 10,000 to about 8,000.

But officials said Thursday that the new proposals under consideration would cut that total, especially of land-based U.S. MX and Soviet SS-18 and SS-24 missiles, capable of carrying 10 nuclear warheads each.

Mr. Bush says such missiles threaten peace because they are more vulnerable targets than submarine missiles and could therefore tempt a nuclear first strike.

Private analysts have speculated that Washington might be willing to make concessions on its hidden submarine missiles in order to get rid of heavy land-based missiles, where the Soviet Union had built up a major numerical advantage.

The United States has previously treated submarine-launched multiwarhead missiles as untouchable because the U.S. Navy is considered far ahead in both the technology and deployment of ballistic missile subs.

President Bush will call for an 11 per cent increase for the space station project next year, as well as money to put robots on the moon and build a new space launch system and a hypersonic transport plane, administration officials say.

Mr. Bush was scheduled to announce his space proposals Fri-

day in a speech to the Young Astronauts Council, according to officials who discussed the proposals Thursday night on condition they not be identified by name.

Mr. Bush's focus will be to reaffirm his commitment to return humans to the moon and send astronauts on to explore Mars, one official said.

The National Aeronautics and Space Administration's (NASA) \$14.3 billion budget will go up modestly under Mr. Bush's 1993 budget proposal, which will be formally unveiled next week.

The space station project, which aims to launch a permanent orbiting platform by 1996, is slated for \$2.25 billion, an 11 per cent increase over 1992 funding. The project last year survived attempts to Congress to cut its funding completely.

The president's proposal will keep space station Freedom on target for astronauts to work in it by 1997 and to be permanently occupied by 2000.

The president's budget also will contain funding for some priorities of the National Space Council, chaired by Vice President Dan Quayle.

Those include money for a programme to put robots on the moon. The robots would precede astronauts who ultimately would live and work on the moon. U.S. astronauts last visited the moon during the early 1970s in the Apollo programme.